THE Freeman

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

APRIL 1965

The Wisdom of Bastiat	William Henry Chamberlin	3
The State	Frederic Bastiat	10
Religion and "The Law"	Glenn L. Pearson	18
The Freedom of Maturity	Melvin D. Barger	27
No Special Privilege for Anyone	Leonard E. Read	30
"Focus on Consumer Needs"	Paul L. Poirot	32
Freedom of the Press	Dean Russell	35
Inflation	John Maynard Keynes	36
The Flight from Reality: 7. The Pragmatic Sanction of Flux	Clarence B. Carson	40
Gerda's Empire	Rebecca West	55
Self-Discipline: Free Choice: Responsibility	Mallory Cross	56
Books:		
"Contracting Out" of Socialism	John Chamberlain	60
Other Books		63

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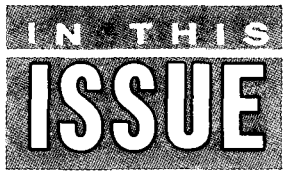

This might be called the Bastiat special edition of THE FREEMAN:

- First, there is William Henry Chamberlin's review of new translations of three of Bastiat's major works ..... p. 3
- Chamberlin called special attention to an essay on "The State," so it seemed appropriate to carry the full text ..... p. 10
- Finally, there is a report of student reactions to Bastiat's **The Law,** which a professor had assigned as a special class project ..... p. 18
- Melvin Barger explains how freedom comes with the maturity of the individual ..... p. 27
- Ask not what government can do for you, but what you should be free to do for yourself and others of your choice ..... p. 30
- Instead of a new governmental bureau to "focus on consumer needs," why *not leave it to those who earn* their living at it — businessmen? ..... p. 32
- Dean Russell throws a new beam of light on the old issue of freedom of the press ..... p. 35
- Believe it or not, John Maynard Keynes once knew precisely why inflation is a disastrous policy .... p. 36
- In this chapter of **The Flight from Reality,** Dr. Carson shows how change came to be worshipped for its own sake ..... p. 40
- Rebecca West here captures the essence of the authoritarian complex that rules so many lives ..... p. 55
- Freedom, explains Miss Cross, is the fruit of self-discipline and responsible choice and action ..... p. 56
- John Chamberlain ponders whether the people of Britain, or any nation so submerged in socialism, can find their way out ..... p. 60
- Whittaker Chambers' **Cold Friday** finds the approval of reviewer Robert Thornton ..... p. 63

Anyone wishing to communicate with authors may send first-class mail in care of THE FREEMAN for forwarding.

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THE Freeman

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THE WISDOM OF

BASTIAT

WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN

AMONG the intellectual champions of the free economy, none surpasses in brilliance, clarity, wit, and humor the French economic writer, Frederic Bastiat, whose life coincided with the first half of the nineteenth century. Thoroughly consistent in outlook, he fought socialism, protectionism, and every form of state intervention in the economic field with a powerful arsenal of weapons, convincing logic, parable, humorous hyperbole. His definition of the state – never more topical than at the present time when its powers in the economic field have swelled far beyond Bastiat's wildest dreams or nightmares – should of itself insure him immortality:

"The state is the great fictitious entity by which everyone seeks to live at the expense of everyone else."

And this is only the high point of a superb essay on the state which is a masterpiece of realistic exposition, brushing aside cant and illusion and making clear, one would think, even to the dullest mind, the illusory fallacy that the state can give without stint or limit, and not, in some way or other, take back the equivalent of its gifts, plus the cost of its own bureaucratic administration,

Mr. Chamberlin is a skilled observer and reporter of economic and political conditions at home and abroad. In addition to writing a number of books, he has lectured widely and is a contributor to *The Wall Street Journal* and numerous magazines.

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from the supposed beneficiaries. The two paragraphs of elaboration that follow the designation of the state as the supreme fiction are as prophetic an indictment of the welfare state as one could find:

> Each of us, more or less, would like to profit from the labor of others. One does not dare to proclaim this feeling publicly, one conceals it from oneself, and then what does one do? One imagines an intermediary; one addresses the state, and each class proceeds in turn to say to it: "You, who can take fairly and honorably, take from the public and share with us!" Alas, the state is only too ready to follow such diabolical advice: for it is composed of cabinet ministers, of bureaucrats, of men, in short, who, like all men, carry in their hearts the desire, and always enthusiastically seize the opportunity, to see their wealth and influence grow. The state understands, then, very quickly the use it can make of the role the public entrusts to it. *It will be the arbiter, the master, of all destinies. It will take a great deal; hence, a great deal will remain for itself. It will multiply the number of its agents; it will enlarge the scope of its prerogatives; it will end by acquiring overwhelming proportions.*
>
> But what is most noteworthy is the astonishing blindness of the public to all this. When victorious soldiers reduced the vanquished to slavery they were barbarous, but they were not absurd. Their object was, as ours is, to live at the expense of others; but, unlike us, they attained it. What are we to think of a people who apparently do not suspect that reciprocal pillage is no less pillage because it is reciprocal, that it is no less criminal because it is carried out legally and in an orderly manner; that it adds nothing to the public welfare; that, on the contrary, it diminishes it by all that this spendthrift intermediary that we call the state costs. (Italics supplied).

Tocqueville's Foresight

This prediction of the expanding role of the state recalls another vision of the perceptive French political scientist and traveler in America, Alexis de Tocqueville, expressed in somewhat more poetic terms:

> Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object were to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood; it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness. It provides for

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their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property and subdivides their inheritances. *What remains but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?* . . .

The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent and guided. Men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence. It does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes and stupifies a people, till *each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.* I have always thought that servitude of the regular, quiet and gentle kind which I have just described might be combined more easily than is commonly believed with some of the outward forms of freedom; and that it might even establish itself under the wing of the sovereignty of the people. (Italics supplied.)

Bastiat's Distinctive Service

Bastiat's works, quite extensive despite the fact that he died comparatively young, are not as well-known to American readers as they should be. So it is a distinct public service of the publishers, the Van Nostrand Company, with the aid of the Volker Foundation, to issue English translations of three of his works under the titles *Selected Essays on Political Economy* (352 pp., $7.50), *Economic Sophisms* (291 pp., $6.75), and *Economic Harmonies* (596 pp., $11.50).

Unlike economists who put their ideas in forbiddingly abstruse and difficult terms, Bastiat operated with humor and satire, understandable to all. He was a master of the device known as *reductio ad absurdum*, making an unsound idea ridiculous by carrying it to extreme conclusions. Two examples of this method are his proposal for "a negative railway" and, best of all, his imaginary petition of candlemakers against the unfair competition of the sun.

Some eager beaver, intent on the local interests of Bordeaux, had proposed that a new railway from Madrid to Paris should have an artifical break, with change of trains at Bordeaux. This would benefit local hotels, carriers, porters, and others standing to gain employment from such a break. An excellent idea, comments Bastiat. But why stop with Bordeaux? Why not break the railway at half a dozen other way stations, for the same supposedly beneficial results? Better yet, why not construct a railway line that is all breaks, a "negative railway"?

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The Candlemakers and the Sun

Even better is the Gargantuan joke of the petitioning candlemakers, protesting to parliament against "the ruinous competition of a foreign rival who apparently works under conditions so far superior to our own for the production of light that he is flooding the domestic market with it at an incredibly low price." The rival, of course, is the sun, and in a superb parody of protectionist arguments the candlemakers suggest that the sun is an agent of England, where it is less frequently visible than in France, and urge, as a remedy, the passing of a law forbidding windows and other means of access to the sun.

Such a law, they argue, would benefit immeasurably the whole French economy. If France consumes more tallow for a larger output of candles, there will have to be more cattle and sheep. So there will be an increase in cleared fields, meat, wool, leather, and especially manure, the basis of all agricultural wealth. As more oil is required for light, there will be an expansion in the cultivation of olives and poppies. Thousands of vessels will be required for whaling; the need for chandeliers and other appurtenances for lighting will grow; there is not one Frenchman, from the wealthy stockholder to the humble seller of matches, whose prosperity will not be enhanced. As the final clinching argument the petitioners point out that customs barriers serve the purpose of keeping cheaper products out of France and they end their appeal:

"Make your choice; but be logical. So long as you ban, as you do, foreign coal, iron, wheat, and textiles, in proportion as their price approaches zero, how inconsistent it would be to admit the light of the sun, of which the price is zero all day long."

As Henry Hazlitt, who writes the introduction to this volume, *Economic Sophisms*, says:

"The petition of the candlemakers is devastating. It is a flash of pure genius, a *reductio ad absurdum* that can never be exceeded, sufficient in itself to assure Bastiat immortal fame among economists."

When he dispenses with humor and resorts to pure reason, Bastiat can be a formidable debater. Consider this passage from one of the sophisms entitled, "Abundance and Scarcity":

> There is a fundamental antagonism between the seller and the buyer.
>
> The former wants the goods on the market to be scarce, in short supply, and expensive. The latter wants them abundant, in plentiful supply, and cheap.

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Our laws, which should at least be neutral, take the side of the seller against the buyer, of the producer against the consumer, of high prices against low prices, of scarcity against abundance. They operate, if not intentionally, at least logically on the assumption that a nation is rich when it is lacking in everything.

One wishes Bastiat had been alive in the twentieth century to observe the operation of the United States farm subsidy legislation, under which all consumers and taxpayers are required to subsidize a few producers for producing as little as possible. One suspects that his normal flow of ridicule and invective would have dried up; he would have felt that it was enough to state the facts without further comment.

A Gifted Pamphleteer

Bastiat is not so much an original, seminal thinker in economics as a highly gifted pamphleteer, prepared to break a lance any day for the propositions that the best service government can render to business, industrial or agricultural, large or small, is to let it alone; that the free market is a far better, more reliable, and painless adjuster of economic difficulties than a variety of state interventions; that the state is incapable of creating wealth and can only give to some by taking from others; that no service or benefit is given free. His message is well summarized in the opening sentences of Arthur Goddard's preface to the English Language Edition of his works:

> Ever since the advent of representative government placed the ultimate power to direct the administration of public affairs in the hands of the people, the primary instrument by which the few have managed to plunder the many has been the sophistry that persuades the victims that they are being robbed for their own benefit. The public has been despoiled of a great part of its wealth and has been induced to give up more and more of its freedom of choice because it is unable to detect the error in the delusive sophisms by which protectionist demagogues, national socialists and proponents of government planning exploit its gullibility and its ignorance of economics.
>
> arthur Goddard

Many of Bastiat's essays are comparatively short and, naturally, there are a number of references to individuals and events of his country and time, although the editors, along with indices and notes, have supplied useful explanations where these seem required. One of his longest and most fruitful essays, entitled "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen," composed shortly before his death, is a searching examination of the invisible as well as the

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visible effects of economic measures. This is a very important subject, because almost every instance of state intervention may seem justified in terms of an immediate favorable effect. It is the long range consequences, invisible at first sight, that are less desirable.

As is often his custom, Bastiat illustrates this point with a homely illustration. Suppose a careless boy breaks a window pane. His father pays six francs for a new pane. Here, it would seem, is a small subsidy and stimulus for the glass industry. In the view of some economists the broken pane is a blessing in disguise. But suppose the pane had not been broken. The six francs would have been spent for a new pair of shoes. The gain of the glass industry is the shoe industry's loss. Bastiat is continually in arms against the fallacy that the government can improve employment by "making" work out of public funds. For what is spent on promoting one kind of job is withdrawn from the support of another.

He exposes this fallacy with one simple example after another. Suppose a farmer wants to drain his land. But the money which he proposed to employ for this purpose is taken away by the tax collector and transferred to the entertainment allowance of the Ministry of the Interior. The Minister may offer a more lavish state dinner; but the farmer loses the advantage of having his land drained. What one group of workers gains is withheld from another. The author sums up his proposition as follows:

> In noting what the state is going to do with the millions of francs voted, do not neglect to note also what the taxpayers would have done, and can no longer do, with these same millions. You see, then, that a public enterprise is a coin with two sides. On one the figure of a busy worker, with this device: What Is Seen; on the other, an unemployed worker, with this device: What Is Not Seen.... The state opens a road, builds a palace, repairs a street, digs a canal; with these projects it gives jobs to certain workers. *That is what is seen.* But it deprives certain other laborers of employment. *That is what is not seen.*

Refutation of Ricardo's Law

In one of his more ambitious works, *Economic Harmonies,* Bastiat lights on an important truth, which, incidentally, refutes Ricardo's "iron law" of wages. This Ricardian concept, so influential on Marx in formulating his theory, and now knocked into a cocked hat by experience in all leading noncommunist industrial nations, held that the poor would grow poorer and more numerous and the rich fewer and richer.

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The truth Bastiat discovered is that, as the amount of capital employed in a nation increases, the share of the resulting production going to the workers grows, both in percentage and in total amount. This is exactly what has happened in the United States and other countries as capital accumulates under the conditions of a market economy.

It is fashionable in some circles to regard capitalism as a luxury that wealthy countries can afford, whereas the underdeveloped areas of the world are supposed to be under some compulsion to adopt socialism. This is one of the least feasible of dogmatic theories. In the first place, how did the capitalist countries invariably become wealthier, if not by permitting the benefits of the market economy under free competition and security of private property? In the second place, why do the "underdeveloped" countries, with their assorted socialist experiments, become steadily poorer, notwithstanding foreign aid on an unprecedented scale? Is it not highly probable that these socialist experiments, with their expropriation of domestic capital and their discouragement of foreign investment, lead inevitably to impoverishment, no matter how much of the accumulated savings of the more well-to-do lands is poured down the drain of subsidization?

The United States and other free countries could well use more Bastiats today to direct a drumfire of reasoned argument and witty ridicule against the current fallacies of the all-powerful state and the supposed curative virtues of state planned economies. To be sure, one of the principal dangers of our age was not a reality in Bastiat's time, when no finance minister would have advocated a planned deficit as a sure recipe for continuing prosperity. Much of his reasoning is based on the assumption that a state expenditure must be balanced by a state-imposed tax.

What Bastiat would have said if confronted with a proposal for higher state expenditures, lower taxes, and budget deficits indefinitely prolonged would defy the imagination. Perhaps his comment would scarcely have been printable. ◈

NOTE: The three volumes of the new translation of these works of Bastiat, published by Van Nostrand, may be ordered from the Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York 10533.

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THE STATE

Frederic Bastiat (1801-1850) was an economist, statesman, and author during a period when France was drifting rapidly toward socialism. His clear description of that trend and its evil consequences, written in 1849, merits serious consideration in the United States of America today.

FREDERIC BASTIAT

I WISH SOMEONE would offer a prize – not of a hundred francs but of a million, with crowns, medals, and ribbons – for a good, simple, intelligible definition of the term, *The State*.

What an immense service such a definition would render to society!

The State! What is it? Where is it? What does it do? What should it do? We only know that it is a mysterious being; and, it is certainly the most petitioned, the most harassed, the most bustling, the most advised, the most reproached, the most invoked, and the most challenged of any being in the world.

I have not the honor of knowing my reader, but I would stake ten to one that sometime in the last six months you have designed Utopias, and if so, that you are looking to The State for the realization of them.

But alas! That poor unfortunate being, like Figaro, knows not which plea to hear nor where to turn. The hundred thousand mouths of the press and of the platform cry out all at once –

Organize work and the workmen.
Cover the country with railways.
Irrigate the plains.
Reforest the hills.
Establish model farms.
Colonize Algeria.
Educate the youth.
Assist the aged.
Equalize the profits of all trades.

Translated and condensed by Mallory Cross, formerly of the Foundation staff, from "L'Etat" in *Sophismes Economiques*, Volume I. Paris: Guillaumin, 1878. See also Miss Cross's article on page 56 of this issue.

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Lend money without interest to all who wish to borrow.

Emancipate Italy, Poland, and Hungary.

Encourage the arts, and train musicians and dancers for us.

Restrict commerce, and at the same time create a merchant marine.

Discover truth, and put a bit of sense into our heads. The mission of The State is to enlighten, to develop, to ennoble, to strengthen, and to sanctify the soul of the people.

"Wait, Gentlemen! A little patience," says The State beseechingly. "I will try to satisfy you, but for that I must have some resources. I have prepared plans for five or six entirely new taxes, the mildest in the world. You will see how gladly people will pay them."

But then a great hue and cry arises: "No! No! A fine thing – doing something with resources! This is hardly worthy of The State! Instead of loading us with new taxes, we call upon you to repeal the old ones. Decrease the salt tax, the liquor tax, the stamp tax, customhouse duties, monopoly license fees, and tolls."

In the midst of this tumult, the people have changed their government two or three times for failing to satisfy all their demands. To date, everything presenting itself under the name of The State is soon overthrown by the people, precisely because it fails to fulfill the somewhat contradictory features of its platform.

I fear we are, in this respect, the dupes of one of the strangest illusions which has ever taken possession of the human mind.

The Origin of Plunder

Man recoils from effort, from suffering. Yet, he is condemned by nature to the suffering of privation if he does not make the effort to work. He has only a choice then, between these two: privation, and work. How can he manage to avoid both? He always has and always will find, only one means: to *enjoy the labor of others;* to arrange it so that the effort and the satisfaction do not fall upon each in their natural proportion, but that some would bear all the effort while all the satisfaction would go to others. This is the origin of slavery and plunder, whatever form it takes – whether wars, impositions, violences, restrictions, frauds, etc., monstrous abuses, but in accord with the idea which has given them birth.

Slavery is subsiding, thank heaven, and our disposition to defend our property prevents direct and open plunder from being easy. However, there remains the unfortunate, primitive inclination in all men to divide the lot of life in-

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to two parts, throwing the trouble upon others and keeping the satisfaction for themselves. Let us examine a current manifestation of this sad tendency.

The Intermediary

The oppressor no longer uses his own force directly upon his victim. No, our conscience has become too sensitive for that. There is still the tyrant and his victim, but between them is an intermediary which is The State – the Law itself. What could be better designed to silence our scruples and – more important – to overcome all resistance? Thus do all of us, by various claims and under one pretext or another, appeal to The State:

"I am dissatisfied with the ratio between my labor and my pleasures. In order to establish the desired balance, I should like to take part of the possessions of others. But that is a dangerous thing. Couldn't you facilitate it for me? Couldn't you give me a good post? Or restrain my competitors' business? Or perhaps lend me some interest-free capital, which you will have taken from its rightful owners? Or bring up my children at the taxpayers' expense? Or grant me a subsidy? Or assure me a pension when I reach my fiftieth year? By this means I shall achieve my goal with an easy conscience, for the law will have acted for me. Thus I shall have all the advantages of plunder, without the risk or the disgrace!"

All of us are petitioning The State in this manner, yet it has been proven that The State has no means of granting privileges to some without adding to the labor of others.

The State is the great fiction through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody.

Today, as in the past, nearly everyone would like to profit by the labor of others. No one dares admit such a feeling; he even hides it from himself. So what does he do? He imagines an intermediary; he appeals to The State, and every class in its turn comes and says to it: "You, who can do so justifiably and honestly, take from the public; and we will partake of the proceeds."

Alas! The State is only too much disposed to follow this diabolical advice; for it is composed of ministers and officials – of men, in short – who, like all other men, desire in their hearts and eagerly seize every opportunity to increase their wealth and influence. The State quickly perceives the advantages it can derive from the role entrusted to it by the public. It will be the judge, the master of the destinies of all. It will take a

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lot: then much will remain for itself. It will multiply the number of its agents, and increase its functions, until it finally acquires crushing proportions.

The Great Illusion

But the most remarkable thing is the astonishing blindness of the public while all this takes place. In the past, when victorious soldiers reduced the vanquished to slavery they were barbarous, but they were not foolish. Their object, like ours, was to live at the expense of others; but they succeeded, where we fail. What are we to think of a people who never seem to realize that *reciprocal plunder* is no less plunder because it is reciprocal; that it is no less criminal, because it is carried out legally and peacefully; that it adds nothing to the public good, but rather diminishes it by the amount of the cost of that expensive intermediary we call The State?

And this great illusion we have placed, for the edification of the people, as a frontispiece to the Constitution. Here are the first words of the preamble:

"France has constituted itself a Republic to . . . raise all the citizens to an ever-increasing degree of morality, enlightenment, and well-being."

Thus it is France – an *abstraction* – which is to raise the French – or *realities* – to morality, well-being, and so on. Isn't it our blind attachment to this strange delusion that leads us to expect everything from a power not our own? Isn't it suggesting that there is, apart from the French people, a virtuous, enlightened, rich being who can and should bestow its favors upon them?

The American Ideal

The Americans develop a different idea of the relationship of the citizens with The State, when they placed these simple words at the beginning of their Constitution:

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain. . . ."

Here is no shadowy creation, no *abstraction,* from which the citizens may demand everything. They expect nothing except from themselves and their own energy.

I contend that the *personification* of The State has been in the past and will be in the future, a fertile source of calamities and revolutions. There is the public on one side, The State on the other,

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considered as two distinct beings; the latter obligated to bestow upon the former, the former having the right to claim from the latter a flood of human benefits. What must happen?

The State has two hands, one for receiving and the other for giving – a rough hand and a smooth one. The activity of the second is necessarily subordinate to the activity of the first. Strictly speaking, The State can take and not give back. This can be seen and can be explained by the porous, absorbing nature of its hands, which always retain part and sometimes all of what it touches.

But that which is never seen, which never will be seen, and which cannot even be imagined, is that The State can return *more* to the people than it has taken from them. Therefore it is ridiculous for us to appear before The State in the humble attitude of beggars. It is utterly impossible for it to confer a specific benefit upon some of the individuals who make up the community, without inflicting a greater injury upon the community as a whole.

A Great Dilemma: Many Benefits and No Taxes

Our demands, therefore, place The State in an obvious dilemma! If it refuses to grant the requested benefit, it is accused of weakness, ill-will, and incapacity. If it tries to grant their requests, it is obliged to load the people with increased taxes – to do more harm than good – and to bring upon itself general displeasure from another quarter.

So, the public has two hopes, and The State makes two promises: *many benefits and no taxes*– hopes and promises, which, being contradictory, can never be realized.

Is not this the cause of all our revolutions? For between The State, which lavishly promises the impossible, and the public, whose hopes can never be realized, there come to interpose two types of men: the ambitious and the Utopians. The circumstances give them their cue. These office seekers need only cry out to the people: "The authorities are deceiving you. If we were in their place, we would load you with benefits and exempt you from taxes."

And the people believe, and the people hope, and the people substitute a new government for the old.

No sooner are their friends in charge of things, than they are called upon to redeem their pledge. "Give us work, bread, assistance, credit, instruction, colonies," say the people, "and meanwhile deliver us, as you promised, from the clutches of the tax gatherer."

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The Problem Persists

The new government is no less embarrassed than the former one, for it is easier to promise the impossible than to do it. It tries to gain time which it needs for maturing its vast projects. First it makes a few timid attempts: On one hand, it slightly expands primary education; on the other, it makes a small reduction in the liquor tax. But the contradiction always confronts the administration: If it would be philanthropic, it must attend to its treasury; if it neglects the treasury, it must give up being philanthropic.

These two promises are always and inevitably clashing with one another. To live upon credit, that is, to exhaust the future, is certainly a temporary method of reconciling them — an attempt to do a little good now, at the expense of a great deal of harm in the future. But this procedure calls forth the specter of bankruptcy, which puts an end to credit. What is to be done then? Why then, the new government defends itself boldly. It unites its forces to maintain itself: It smothers opinion, has recourse to arbitrary measures, ridicules its former slogans, declares that it is impossible to govern except at the risk of being unpopular; in short, it proclaims itself *governmental.*

And this is what other candidates for office are waiting for. They exploit the same illusion, follow the same course, obtain the same success, and are soon swallowed up in the same abyss.

The Great Society!

The latest manifesto of the Montagnards, which they issued at the time of the presidential election, concludes with these words: —"*The State ought to give a great deal to the people, and take little from them.*" It is always the same tactics, or rather, the same mistake. The State must:

Give free instruction and education to all the citizens.

Give a general and professional education, as much as possible adapted to the needs, talents, and capacities of each citizen.

Teach every citizen his duty to God, to man, and to himself; develop his perceptions, his aptitudes, and his faculties; teach him, in short, the skill of his trade; make him understand his own interests, and give him a knowledge of his rights.

Place within the reach of all literature and the arts, the heritage of thought, the treasures of the mind, and all those intellectual possessions which elevate and strengthen the soul.

Give compensation for every disaster, fire, flood, etc., experienced by a citizen. (The *et cetera* means more than it says.)

Act as mediator in the relations

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between capital and labor, and become the regulator of credit.

Give substantial encouragement and effectual support to agriculture.

Purchase railroads, canals, and mines – and doubtless administer them with its characteristic industrial ability!

Encourage useful experiments, promote and assist them by every means likely to make them successful. As a regulator of credit, it will have extensive control over industrial and agricultural associations in order to assure their success.

The State *must* do all this, in addition to the services to which it is already pledged! For instance, it is always to maintain a menacing attitude towards foreigners. The signers of the manifesto say that: "Bound together by this holy union, and by the precedents of the French Republic, we carry our wishes and hopes beyond the barriers which despotism has raised between nations. The rights which we desire for ourselves, we desire for all those who are oppressed by the yoke of tyranny; we desire that our glorious army should, if necessary, again be the army of liberty."

You see that the gentle hand of The State – that good hand which gives and distributes – will be very busy under the direction of these reformers. You think perhaps it will be the same with the rough hand – that hand which penetrates and takes from our pockets?

Political Promises

Do not deceive yourselves. The politicians would not know their trade, if they had not the art, when showing the gentle hand, to conceal the rough one. Their reign will assuredly be the jubilee of the taxpayers!

"It is luxuries, not necessaries," they say, "which ought to be taxed."

Won't it be wonderful that the treasury, in overwhelming us with favors, will content itself with curtailing our luxuries!

This is not all. This party of reformers intends that "taxation shall lose its oppressive character, and be only an act of brotherhood." Good heavens! I know it is the fashion to thrust brotherhood in everywhere, but I did not imagine it would ever be put into the proclamations of the tax gatherer.

Well, I ask the impartial reader, is this not childishness, and more than that, dangerous childishness? Is it not inevitable that we shall have revolution after revolution, if it is once decided never to stop till this contradiction is realized: "Give nothing to The State and receive much from it"?

Citizens! At all times, two polit-

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ical systems have been in existence, and each can justify itself with good reasons. According to one of them, The State should do a lot, but then it should take a lot. According to the other, this twofold activity ought to be limited. We have to choose between these two systems.

But the third system, which partakes of both the others, and consists in exacting everything from The State without giving it anything, is chimerical, absurd, childish, contradictory, and dangerous. Those who advocate such a system are only flattering and deceiving you, or at least are deceiving themselves.

As for us, we consider that The State is and ought to be nothing whatever but *community force* organized, not to be an instrument of oppression and mutual plunder among citizens, but, on the contrary, to guarantee to each his own, and to cause justice and security to reign. ◈

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IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Government's First Duty

SUCH A LAWLESS SEIZURE of property no government worthy of the name will tolerate or condone. . . . When any individual or organization under whatsoever name attempts to use force to gain his or its ends, they are attempting to usurp governmental functions. This attempt unless promptly and effectively restrained by legally constituted authority leads to lawlessness, disorder, and anarchy, which is the very negation of all government. The law cannot temporize with lawlessness. *The first duty of government is to govern,* that is, to maintain law and order at all hazards and regardless of expense; only by doing this does it fulfill its legitimate function, which is the protection of life, liberty, and property.

CHIEF JUSTICE MAXEY, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Carnegie Illinois Steel Corp. vs. *United Steelworkers of America.* [353 Pa. 420, 45 A. 2d 857 (1946)]

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RELIGION AND

A professor of religious instruction at Brigham Young University explains how Frederic Bastiat assists in his classes.

"THE LAW"

GLENN L. PEARSON

MY STUDENTS come from all walks of life, nearly every state of the Union, and many foreign lands. They are the product mainly of public schools. They believe the Founding Fathers established a democracy. In most cases, the U.N., not Christ, is their hope for peace. They believe the truth can be established by ballot. They probably never have met anyone who comprehended the free market idea. To them, free enterprise is a conspiracy between rich men and crooked politicians. They are not raw material; they are the half-finished product of a machine that was confused about what it was supposed to be making. They are my challenge – the reason why I go on teaching despite the lure of greener pastures.

Teachers of the freedom philosophy have to be "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves" – wise enough to induce students to listen to ideas they have been conditioned to reject.

My latest plan to stimulate thinking was to require a book report on *The Law,* by Frederic Bastiat, from all students seeking a top mark in my course on religion. There were 413 students involved in this experiment. One hundred five accepted the challenge, though not all of them earned A's in the course. None objected to the project, and several stated that they read the book

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even though they did not report on it.

Statement of the Premise

In presenting the project to the students, I capitalized on the fact that they were voluntarily enrolled in a private university. They had prior knowledge of the university's policies and requirements. So they were in the class by voluntary contract. Early in the semester I discussed the relationship of the students to the school, to me, and to the project. This is the essence of what I said:

"This is a private university. It is not operated by public servants nor supported by taxes. Your tuition and fees pay for about one-fourth of the immediate costs of the education you receive here. The rest is paid out of the voluntary contributions of the members of the Church to which most of you belong.

"You came here voluntarily as far as we know. Therefore, you are taking this course by voluntary contract, not by compulsion.

"When two parties enter into a contract, they do so because each hopes to benefit by the contract. You hope to be spiritually and materially benefited by your education here. We who pay most of the bill hope to see you saved from the misery of a life without principle or spiritual direction, which we suppose is more apt to be the case without religious education. Ours is an intangible benefit, but it is just as real to us as anything you hope to gain. If you are not a willing party to the contract, you have no business being here.

"You also have an implicit personal contract with me. At registration you chose my class for some reason or other. You all know your reasons. In each case you hoped to gain something by making the choice.

"Now that you are here, I owe you something and you owe me something. I owe you my sincere effort to offer you what I believe is true and good for you, and still respect your right to reject it. You owe me the respect to try to understand me. You do not have to believe me, and you will not be graded on whether or not you believe me. Your grade will depend in part on how well you understand me. I do not pretend to sit in judgment on your beliefs, your convictions, or your characters. There is no way I could do that successfully even if I wanted to. But I will try to discover how well you understand me.

"I want you to know that I believe that government should be limited to the protection of life, liberty, and property. I believe in a free market economy and a republican form of government such

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as our Founding Fathers attempted to establish when they met in Philadelphia to write the Constitution. I believe that liberty is in great jeopardy in America, that the Constitution is 'hanging by a thread,' and that the American people are, in large measure, living by legal plunder. I believe all of these ideas are religious in nature to any man who claims to believe in God. Indeed, I believe religion and liberty are as inseparable as life and blood. And I believe that the solution to America's problems is a reawakened respect for God and righteousness.

"You no doubt have heard the welfare state defended on the grounds that it is our duty to be our 'brother's keeper.' To hear the other side of a matter is to be made free to decide which side is right. One of the best books I have read on 'the other side' of the welfare state is *The Law* by Frederic Bastiat. This book was written in 1850. As you read it, you will wonder how anyone who lived that long ago could know our times so well.

"I strongly recommend that all of you read *The Law*. I will not make it a requirement to pass the course. But I will expect all who are trying to demonstrate that they are A students to read it and write a report on it.

"I urge you to read *The Law* with an open mind. I consider it one of the dozen books that have had the most profound effect on my life. I do not ask you to believe it; but I do ask you to understand it. In your report I want you to demonstrate that you understood the book and that you see why I consider it a fit supplement for this course in religion."

The Students Respond

Four of the 105 who reported on *The Law* wrote adverse criticisms. Three said they believed Bastiat was right but that his ideas wouldn't work. About twenty confined their remarks to an accurate, knowledgeable report of the contents of the book. But the vast majority were enthusiastic in their praise. Following are some typical statements:

~ "Evidently I am one of many individuals who has been duped into believing that, without the law to instigate and enforce public education, charity, civil rights, etc., the general population would be too lackadaisical and stupid to initiate these and similar needs on their own. . . He has stirred my imagination enough that I want to continue my reading and find answers to my questions. I believe in his theory, but now I need more information to rearrange my present thinking."

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~ "*The Law*, written by the nineteenth century economist and statesman, Frederic Bastiat, is a short and powerful pamphlet that serves as a yardstick for the validity of any government that has existed or ever will exist. . . .

"The one most important thing that this book declares is that truth and righteousness in government are as simple as truth in anything else no matter what the time or the circumstances. If the law is perverted, justice no longer exists."

~ "*The Law* by Frederic Bastiat is a very outstanding book. It opened my eyes to the real aim of legislators and government. It also brought to my realization the true meaning of liberty, and that it is the most precious thing to everyone. We should guard our liberty as a priceless possession; therefore, we should learn what true liberty is. *The Law* helps one to really understand liberty, law, and government so that we may know the good and the bad of the society in which we live.

"I can see from reading this book why Mr. Pearson has said so much about the government, the United Nations, education, and politics."

~ "Just as *The Law* was a book for the people of France in 1850, it is a book for the people of America in 1965. As I read *The Law*, I realized more than ever that men create their own problems. Because of this, problems usually are the same, even over a long period of years. In 1850 Frederic Bastiat mentioned what he termed legal plunder. Unknowingly, Americans engage in this very thing almost daily. . . . Often we hear politicians say, "I'll look after you." We need to fear these words now, just as Bastiat did in his day. Passiveness leads to dictatorship."

~ This forceful thesis gives a very thought provoking and penetrating message. . . . I believe that every citizen should read this book and become seriously acquainted with all it advocates."

~ "One cannot help but look around and see the many evidences of legal plunder in the United States. People seem to have the attitude that government should do what one cannot do for himself, yet they have let it go many steps farther than that. Through their greed, they are anxious and willing that the government should do the many things for them that they are unwilling to do for themselves. As the daughter of a farmer, I am well aware of the protective tariffs and subsidies that the farmer receives from the government. But, because they do benefit

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us, we justify them. The people themselves are their own enemy, the enemy of freedom. . . .

"The material presented in this book can serve as a warning to us that we can destroy ourselves as the civilizations of old did through their greed."

~ "Unless we return to the original purpose for which governments have been established, we will be pushed further into the socialistic state. Mr. Bastiat has prophetically warned us of the dangers and the road to political and moral destruction. Those that think we have nothing to fear should listen to the words of our President: 'We are going to try to take all of the money that we think is unnecessarily being spent and take it from the *haves* and give it to the *have nots* that need it so much.' "

~ "We can see throughout the United States the effects of complacency toward the law. We seem to care not what it does as long as it seems to be aiding us – and therein is the fallacy of socialism."

~ "Little did I suspect when I sat down to read *The Law* the enjoyment and enlightenment which I would receive. . . . Never before had I stopped to seriously consider the misuse of the 'law' here within our own United States. . . .

"Having recently read the book entitled *Animal Farm,* having spent a year living in a socialistic country [Norway], and having just completed a research paper for economics on capitalism vs. socialism, *The Law* had a deeper meaning for me. The greatest hatred I have ever found develop within me has been against socialism in watching it in action. [I know this boy well and am sure he is devoid of real hatred. He is one of the most loving and kindly souls I have ever known.] And I agree completely with Mr. Bastiat that 'protectionism, socialism, and communism are basically the same plant in three stages of its growth.' "

Many of the best comments were too deeply involved in the personal religion of the students to make them quotable. The lives of these students will never be the same for having read *The Law.* Even the four students who rejected the general thesis of the book praised it in part and said it had spurred them on to greater thought.

Four Critics—Six Points

Three of the critics agreed that Bastiat was right, but thought his ideas wouldn't work. This is to say that the truth either won't work,

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or that it isn't right after all. It denies the validity of Jesus' statement that "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." It denies the idea that the human race can improve its standards and conditions or work toward the perfection enjoined by the Sermon on the Mount.

This damning of the truth "with faint praise" is, in essence, the argument of expediency. Some people believe in principle whatever the consequences. Others are what a colleague of mine calls "card players." They make their decisions on the basis of what they think is best for themselves at the moment. This is living by policy instead of principle.

In dealing with this attitude, I find that it pays to get the student to think through an extreme prototype of the expediency argument. What prototype you choose will have to be determined by your convictions and those of your students. One that has never failed me goes like this:

Teacher: Do you believe it is good for women to bear children?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Suppose all women conspired to stop bearing children; would you then advocate the use of rape as a means of solving the problem?

Usually the point is seen without elaboration: resorting to violence is never justified no matter what good you think you can accomplish by it. Most people see this when it is graphically explained to them. Freedom does not demand that all think alike, only that all are protected from plunder alike; we can afford to let the few who do not see the point go on in their darkness.

The Cry of Anarchy

Another common adverse criticism was that *The Law* advocated a lawless or anarchic society. One of the students who made this accusation was rather vague. His paper was mostly a matter-of-fact review of the book. Then, in his concluding paragraph, he stated, "This book has given me an appreciation of the so-called 'conservative position' of our present day. I can correlate many of the teachings of religion with Mr. Bastiat's. . . . I do not agree fully, however, in all of Mr. Bastiat's postulations. I think he shows, at times, signs of anarchism. Again, I state that my appreciation and understanding of the conservative position is greatly enhanced."

There was no hint as to what other "postulations" he disagreed with. Of course, Bastiat does not "postulate" anarchy; but the cry of anarchy is a common complaint against those who believe in the free market.

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It isn't the quantity of law and regulation which determines whether a state of anarchy exists. It is the quality of the law. If there were no law but this, *I will not rob another man of his property nor control what he does with it* – and if that law were written on all men's hearts, it wouldn't have to be in a book, and we would need very little else as a legal framework on which to build a truly "great society."

No, Bastiat cannot be called an anarchist – either of the so-called far left or the so-called far right. He believed in strong governmental protection of life, liberty, and property. He believed in strong voluntary adherence to God's law and natural law. And he believed in strong protection of the natural rights of all men when those rights were endangered by the lawless who sought to live by plunder – legal or illegal.

Let's Be Constructive

A third adverse criticism of *The Law* followed a common cliché of our times: "He is good at criticism; but he offers no solution to the problem." Many think that, if they can label a man as one who has offered no solution, they have destroyed the value of his criticism. They demand that there be some kind of a state plan for agriculture, education, and so on. In economic matters, the best plan is to have no master plan. Leonard Read has explained this in *Anything That's Peaceful,* chapter twelve, "The Most Important Discovery in Economics." He sums it up in a sentence: "*Let the payment for each individual's contribution be determined by what others will offer in willing exchange.*"[1] In essence, this is the plan that Bastiat offered. It not only is a brave idea, but it is so foreign to the thinking of those who deem the state the instigator of all good action and the provider of all goods and services that they may miss the point entirely.

From one young man's paper, I got the impression that he visualized the government as a sort of flexible undergirding, an air mattress under the body-politic. But unlike the usual air mattress, in this case instead of the air departing to areas of less pressure when you walk on it, it would rush to the spot where you place your foot and hold you on an even plane with the rest of the mattress.Thus, when some part of society fails to

[1] Leonard E. Read, *Anything That's Peaceful* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N. Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, 1964), p. 154. I consider this book a logical sequel to *The Law*. It answers all objections to *The Law* raised by my students and gives a more complete and up-to-date rationale for the principles of liberty.

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produce the contribution expected, the government will step in and take care of the deficit. The student applied this principle especially in schooling. He was sure that if the government were not there to keep things going, there would be no education. He agreed that it would be well if this could be done without the government, but thought there must be a powerful government waiting to rush in to prevent civilization from crumbling when "society" fails.

Fixing the Responsibility

A fourth criticism of *The Law* was a variant of the third. One student said that Bastiat failed to make anyone responsible for education. This presumes that education is something that is given, not received or sought for, and that it must be formal to be effective. It also presumes that you can educate someone against his will, that you can educate the uneducable, and that passing from one grade to another is education.

There is a natural responsibility for education. The responsibility lies in part with the man and wife who brought the child into the world. They can enter into voluntary relationships with like-minded people to take care of part of this responsibility. Since all education is religious education no matter what the field or what you try to do with it, it follows that religious societies are a natural focal point for parents to unite in the education of their children.

The greatest responsibility for education lies with the individual himself. As he emerges into more and more of an independent personality and agent, he must assume this responsibility. In fact, he *does* assume it no matter what the state or his parents may try to do to prevent it. All they accomplish is a wasteful frustration of his will and productive capacity when they try to force their will upon him.

Only one student of 105 bewailed Bastiat's failure to fix the responsibility for education, while scores noticed that he had the ideal solution to the problem. Especially did they quote and enlarge upon his statement to the effect that the socialists accuse us of being against education simply because we are opposed to education based upon legal plunder.

Propaganda

A fifth adverse comment criticized *The Law* as being propaganda. This boy defined propaganda as something which is written to generate action. If one agrees with that definition and with the student's further assumption that all propaganda is evil, then *The Law* is what he concluded it was,

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an evil book. In that case, so is the Bible. Anyone who knows much about the methods of propaganda will recognize this as a clumsy attempt to use propaganda methods to discredit *The Law*.

Propaganda is a big subject. Obviously it isn't necessary to say much about it here. But there is one idea that I will attempt to impart to this young man if I get another chance: The use of propaganda becomes increasingly dangerous and sinister as it becomes increasingly the tool of the most powerful agency in any given community. Or, put another way, the potential danger in propaganda methods is proportionate to the potential power of the agency using it. *The Law* has no coercive power behind it. But who can say how dangerous it is? The truth has destroyed empires and caused the schemes of wicked men to come to nought.

The sixth objection to *The Law* was highly personal and tied up in the student's religious views. It was more of a total rejection of his teacher's religious philosophy than of Bastiat's views on economics and morality.

In summation, I have no evidence that the reading of *The Law* did anyone any harm. All but the propagandist seemed to profit greatly from it. The high percentage of warm acceptance is a tribute to the power of truth to win out over error when it has a chance to be heard. The experiment will be continued. ◈

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

The Law and Education

YOU SAY: "There are persons who lack education," and you turn to the law. But the law is not, in itself, a torch of learning which shines its light abroad. The law extends over a society where some persons have knowledge and others do not; where some citizens need to learn, and others can teach. In this matter of education, the law has only two alternatives: It can permit this transaction of teaching-and-learning to operate freely and without the use of force, or it can force human wills in this matter by taking from some of them enough to pay the teachers who are appointed by government to instruct others, without charge. But in this second case, the law commits legal plunder by violating liberty and property.

FREDERIC BASTIAT, *The Law* (1850)

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THE FREEDOM OF MATURITY

MELVIN D. BARGER

The truly unfettered life is that marked by order and responsibility.

NOT TOO MANY years ago it was considered an exercise of personal freedom when great-grandfather drove strangers off his land at gunpoint or solved the problem of bothersome neighbors by pulling up stakes and heading west. This freedom to act as our hardy ancestor did is, in most cases, denied the members of today's complicated society.

But now our increased knowledge of human behavior suggests that, for all this freedom of action, great-grandfather might not have been free where it really counted—in his own mind. He may have been the slave of his own emotional immaturity. And his actions, though bold and daring on the surface, may have been a cover for fears that he never dared to face.

The need to develop personal maturity, to face the problems that our forebears sometimes ignored, is getting increased attention these days in the social sciences, in religious organizations, and in business. Typical of the growing concern in this area of study is a recent paper entitled, "A Look at Emotional Maturity," issued by a college in southern Michigan.[1]

The authors of the paper define maturity as effective or adequate adaptation to inner and outer stress and strain. The lack of sufficient maturity, they say, is most commonly revealed in stress situations by reactions which they term "fear," "flight," and "fight."

As an illustration of an immature reaction which involves both

From the January 1965 issue of *The Flying A*, a publication of the Aeroquip Corporation of Jackson, Michigan, of which Mr. Barger is Editor.

[1] The Hillsdale College Leadership Letter, Hillsdale, Michigan, October, 1964. Issued by the Leadership Workshop and edited by Laurence J. Taylor, Vice-President for Leadership Development.

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"fear" and flight," they cite the case of a store manager who arrived at work on a Monday morning to discover that his failure to adjust the refrigeration at Saturday's closing had caused the spoilage of frozen foods. His reaction? He simply relocked the store and fled, not to be found until that afternoon. Meanwhile an assistant arrived at work and solved the problem.

In another case studied, an executive would blow up on the job and fly into temper tantrums. For several days afterward he would sneak into his own office by a private entrance, seeing only his secretary. And in still another case of personal immaturity—one which might be termed the "fight" method of reacting – a machine shop foreman would throw things and shout obscenities at a workman who had made a mistake.

These cases could be multiplied by thousands, and they all add up to a heavy toll in personal wear-and-tear on the individuals involved as well as considerable financial cost to business.

Of course these victims of immaturity usually lead troubled lives and, in actual practice, have far less freedom to control their affairs than do emotionally stable people. The immature person's way of life, the authors of the paper say, is the way of the slave and the automaton. It is the way of failure, disappointment, misery, and strife.

What to do about it? The answer, of course, lies in the direction of self-improvement, of achieving personal growth and maturity. The paper does not outline a route or offer an easy short cut to such growth. It does, however, suggest several qualities of character which seem to be present in mature persons. The individual's job is to face himself as he really is and to seek more of these qualities in himself, thus becoming mature or "growing up."

Principles to Grow By

Not surprisingly, one condition for growth seems to be the development of definite principles as well as purpose. The paper says, "Whatever one calls it, a balanced life calls for goals, beliefs, and baselines which act as a guide for the thought and action of an individual. He can think through the what and why before he moves to the how of his conduct."

Such a person "responds" to situations, he doesn't react to them. An insult does not throw him into rage, mistakes or threats do not cause him to lose control. He remains in charge of himself. "Why should I let this other person decide what my conduct should be?" replied a man, when asked

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why he hadn't struck back at an insult.

A second characteristic of the mature person is flexibility, the ability to "roll with the punch." This is not indifference or resignation. The authors insist that the individual must keep at his best. But he should have the capacity to yield gracefully and with no great sense of personal loss when the occasion calls for it. The mature man recognizes the need for change and for accommodating himself at times to the views and wishes of others. He does not waste his time and energy in a rigid defensive effort to have his own way all the time.

Self-acceptance seems to be the third quality of mature personality. The grown-up person has learned to accept himself as he is and does not lose himself in vain fantasy or a futile yearning for perfection. He knows that he is a creature of mistakes and he lives with that reality.

At the same time, however, he perceives his own possibility for improvement and growth. He may never become perfect, but if he continues to try, he will get better. That knowledge alone is enough to lift today's efforts and problems to a higher plane in his attitude toward them.

The last quality named is courage, indispensable in the freedom of maturity. Without courage, no person could face himself in the first place, or go through the enormous personal effort and heartache that usually accompany growth. But it is courage that gives the individual his forward motion.

Courage sometimes has a dramatic sound, as if it's something that is exercised only on the battlefield or in time of great danger. But the best examples of courage are constantly unfolding all around us. The person who faces a problem in himself and overcomes it has demonstrated courage. So has the individual who tries something new and daring – a business venture, a different line of work, a change of viewpoint. And it takes considerable courage for a person to admit that he's been wrong.

But the individual who finds the courage to face problems arrives at his goal; he becomes mature by facing problems – the seeking becomes its own reward. He also discovers that many problems can be solved before they ever occur if they're faced realistically. In any case, he begins to live as he learns to face and to affirm life. And learning to control himself, he gains a certain degree of control over his life. He has found the freedom that comes with emotional maturity. ◈

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NO SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR ANYONE

LEONARD E. READ

THOSE WHO SEEK to promote liberty by limiting the power of government often are "floored" with a tricky question, "Very well! Just what would you eliminate?"

It would take a lifetime to answer that question in detail. But it can be answered on principle, leaving some of the difficult details to the questioner. For example:

"I would favor the rescinding of all governmental action — Federal, state, or local — which would interfere with any individual's freedom:

. . . to pursue his peaceful ambition to the full extent of his abilities, regardless of race or creed or family background;

. . . to associate peaceably with whom he pleases for any reason he pleases, even if someone else thinks it's a stupid reason;

. . . to worship God in his own way, even if it isn't "orthodox";

. . . to choose his own trade and to apply for any job he wants — and to quit his job if he doesn't like it or if he gets a better offer;

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. . . to go into business for himself, be his own boss, and set his own hours of work – even if it's only three hours a week;

. . . to use his honestly acquired property in his own way – spend it foolishly, invest it wisely, or even give it away. Beyond what is required as one's fair share to an agency of society limited to keeping the peace, the fruits of one's labor are one's own;

. . . to offer his services or products for sale on his own terms, even if he loses money on the deal;

. . . to buy or not to buy any service or product offered for sale, even if refusal displeases the seller;

. . . to agree or disagree with any other person, whether or not the majority is on the side of the other person;

. . . to study and learn whatever strikes his fancy, as long as it seems to him worth the cost and effort of studying and learning it;

. . . to do as he pleases in general, as long as he doesn't infringe the equal right and opportunity of every other person to do as he pleases."

Unless a devotee of statism specifies which of the above liberties he would deny the individual, he implicitly approves the free market, private property, limited government way of life.

If, on the other hand, he insists that the individual should be deprived of one or more of the above liberties, then let him defend his position. Trying to present his case will more surely convince him of his error than any reform talk a libertarian can contrive. Let him talk himself out of his own illiberality!

In short, instead of attempting to explain the thousands upon thousands of governmental activities you would eliminate, let the author of the tricky question explain just one peaceful activity he would deny to the individual. Isn't this putting the burden of proof where it belongs? ◈

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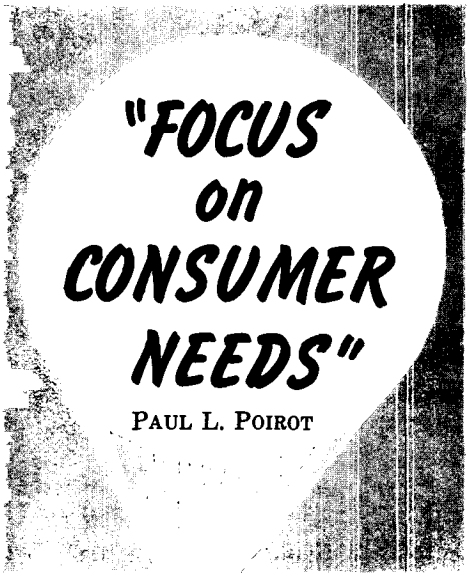

THE CONSEQUENCE of the Federal government's latest attempt to carry out a program of consumer protection on a major scale was that housewives couldn't get meat or butter or sugar to satisfy their family needs, except as they might find a butcher or grocer or someone willing to practice bootlegging. The time was a generation ago during World War II; and the Office of Price Administration was the intervening agency responsible for those barriers between willing buyers and sellers.

Many Americans, however, had gained some practice and skill in "black marketing" during the years of Prohibition from 1920 through 1933. So, aside from the petty annoyances and inconveniences of price control and rationing, the government's program for protecting consumers during World War II was not the national calamity it might have been if rigid enforcement had prevailed. It didn't result in famine as similar "protections" have done in India, or cause the United States to lose the war as happened when Antwerp tried price control to protect its citizens under siege in 1585.[1] By and large, the attempted intercession on behalf of consumers during World War II simply did not succeed; American consumers managed to protect themselves.

Governments, however, are prone to repeat mistakes, for the resources squandered in such ventures by government officials are rarely their own. Hence, as a tactical maneuver in the War on Poverty, the President has appointed a Committee on Consumer Interests which is charged with the responsibility, among other things, to "focus on consumer needs which can appropriately be met through Federal action, whether under existing laws or new legislation."

What all this means is that, *if*

[1] See "How to Lose a War" by John Fiske, THE FREEMAN, December, 1964, page 17.

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we're going to try to *consume* our way to prosperity, we'll need to use coercion. No individual can peacefully consume his way out of poverty; he might be able to steal his way out, but that would be both immoral and illegal.

The poor individual's only peaceful recourse – aside from charitable offerings – is to try to work his way out of poverty, that is, produce or earn the additional goods and services he wants. And a helpful means to that end is voluntary exchange in the open market.

An outstanding feature of the open market is the businessman, whose success or failure depends entirely upon his ability to "focus on consumer needs" and so combine existing and potential factors of production to serve consumers most efficiently. The only constructive role government can play under the free market method of overcoming poverty is to see that the participation of individuals is strictly voluntary – that none is permitted to steal from or cheat or enslave another. In the free and open society, the organized force of government is to be used only if necessary to protect the lives and the property of peaceful individuals. In other words, the proper function of government is to protect against robbery rather than practice it.

By the Choice of the Individual, or Government Control?

The alternatives are quite clear. The question is whether human energy is to be free for use according to the choice of each individual; or, is the government to regulate and control the productive efforts of individuals and the fruits thereof?

As each of us faces that particular decision, he should be well aware that competitive private enterprise by way of a free market can never be expected to overcome poverty in the absolute sense that all desires will be satisfied or that all will be equal in their possession and enjoyment of the necessities and comforts of life. Even if by some miracle it were possible to start everyone equally each morning, each with freedom to use his share as he pleased, by nightfall the material wealth of the world would again be distributed unevenly and the "lower third" would "go to bed hungry." Freedom assures the individual of nothing but the unbridled opportunity to do the best he can with the abilities with which the Creator endowed him.

This may seem to some persons to be inadequate – that the poorly endowed are entitled to more than they are capable of earning. Anyone who feels that way surely should be free to exhaust his own

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resources in behalf of the poor. Beyond that, however, if such persons then feel prepared to take upon themselves the role of the Creator – which must be the presumption of anyone advocating government direction of peaceful human affairs – they also should be well aware that never yet, in the long history of mankind, has there been a single case where such intervention has resulted in the alleviation of poverty. Joseph's and the Pharaoh's ever-normal granary in ancient Egypt lured a nation into bondage; the share-and-share-alike-from-a-common-storehouse plan of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock had to be abandoned lest everyone perish; and the agrarian reformers in modern Red China still face the same old consequences of massive coercion: mass starvation.

Not Necessarily So

We may acknowledge that in the comparatively free market economies, even in the United States today, there is no equality of material possessions. Some persons have a great deal more than the minimum requirements to sustain life, while others face poverty; and perhaps there may be some few who actually go to bed hungry at night. But to observe that the free market has not totally eliminated poverty does not justify the conclusion that poverty, therefore, will automatically be overcome if the market is abandoned and the government placed in control of distribution.

To observe that a man cannot walk very well with a broken leg does not necessarily mean that he will be able to walk better if we equalize matters by breaking his other leg, too! If a person has only the ability and the incentive to earn two square meals a day, it does not necessarily serve him right to relieve him of the incentive – the necessity – to earn those two meals. If the government subsidizes poverty, it does not necessarily mean that poverty will thereby be diminished; on the contrary, it necessarily means that poverty will tend to be popularized as a way of life.

The free market rewards those who are most productive, those who serve consumers most efficiently, whereas government intervention on behalf of consumers rewards those who produce the least and operate most inefficiently. These opposed methods of reward have different effects on the production process; the market method encourages production, whereas the coercive government method takes away the incentive to produce. Which method will be most likely to alleviate poverty ought to be perfectly clear. ◈

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FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

DEAN RUSSELL

TO THE BEST of my knowledge, freedom of the press (the printed word) is complete in the United States today. That is, anyone can still write whatever he pleases and (subject to our reasonable libel laws) the police will protect both him and his manuscript. But all too many of us confuse "freedom to write" with "what is printed." Both my liberal and conservative friends are equally guilty of this disservice to freedom. If they disagree with what is printed in the newspapers, they are often prone to complain that freedom of the press doesn't exist. That attitude demonstrates a total misunderstanding of the meaning of freedom of the press.

For example, it so happens that I am in general disagreement with the editorial viewpoints expressed by more than 90 per cent of the large daily newspapers in our country. But that fact has nothing whatever to do with the existence of freedom of the press. The only issue of consequence is whether or not the owners and editors of the newspapers are printing what *they themselves* choose to print – and for any good or bad reason that pleases them. If any publisher is ever compelled to print viewpoints that do not appeal to him personally, freedom of the press will be finished.

There is, of course, only one source from which that compulsion could come – government. Yet I have heard many of my teaching colleagues seriously propose the idea that newspapers should be compelled to print all viewpoints or, worse yet, that the government should establish "opposition newspapers" as a "public service." Both proposals are, of course, the reverse of freedom of the press.

The only valid test of freedom of the press is this: Can you write anything you please, pay to have it printed, and send it through the mails at your own expense without police interference? If so, freedom of the press is complete. If not, there is no freedom of the press. The fact that you may not have the large amount of capital that is today required to establish a daily newspaper is in no way related to this issue. ◈

Dr. Russell, economist, is a member of the staff of The Foundation for Economic Education.

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INFLATION

The decisions of a person in high political office have an immediate (and sometimes disastrous) effect on all of us. Thus, it is obvious that what such a person says can be far more important than what any one of the rest of us says. But if our objective is to improve our own understanding of truth, we should devote more attention to **what is said** than to who says it. It is in this latter sense that we here offer this incisive explanation by Lord Keynes of inflation and its destructive results. The fact that he later repudiated his own brilliant logic is beside the point; for we are reprinting his 1920 explanation,* not because Keynes said it, but **because it is true.**

The following passage was published shortly after Keynes's resignation as the official representative of the British Treasury at the Paris Peace Conference, and before the worst of the postwar German inflation.

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

LENIN is said to have declared that the best way to destroy the Capitalist System was to debauch the currency. By a continuing process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens. By this method they not only confiscate, but they confiscate *arbitrarily;* and, while the process impoverishes many, it actually enriches some. The sight of this arbitrary rearrangement of riches strikes not only at security, but at confidence in the equity of the existing distribution of wealth. Those to whom the system brings windfalls, beyond their deserts and even beyond their expectations or desires, become "profiteers," who are the object of the hatred of the bourgeoisie, whom the inflationism has impoverished, not less than of the proletariat. As the inflation proceeds and the real value of the currency fluctuates wildly from month to month, all permanent relations between debtors and creditors, which form the ultimate foundation of

*From *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* by John Maynard Keynes, copyright, 1920, by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., renewed, 1948, by Lydia Lopokova Keynes. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

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capitalism, become so utterly disordered as to be almost meaningless; and the process of wealth-getting degenerates into a gamble and a lottery.

Lenin was certainly right. There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency. The process engages all the hidden forces of economic law on the side of destruction, and does it in a manner which not one man in a million is able to diagnose.

In the latter stages of the war all the belligerent governments practised, from necessity or incompetence, what a Bolshevist might have done from design. Even now, when the war is over, most of them continue out of weakness the same malpractices. But further, the Governments of Europe, being many of them at this moment reckless in their methods as well as weak, seek to direct on to a class known as "profiteers" the popular indignation against the more obvious consequences of their vicious methods. These "profiteers" are, broadly speaking, the entrepreneur class of capitalists, that is to say, the active and constructive element in the whole capitalist society, who in a period of rapidly rising prices cannot help but get rich quick whether they wish it or desire it or not. If prices are continually rising, every trader who has purchased for stock or owns property and plant inevitably makes profits. By directing hatred against this class, therefore the European Governments are carrying a step further the fatal process which the subtle mind of Lenin had consciously conceived. The profiteers are a consequence and not a cause of rising prices. By combining a popular hatred of the class of entrepreneurs with the blow already given to social security by the violent and arbitrary disturbance of contract and of the established equilibrium of wealth which is the inevitable result of inflation, these Governments are fast rendering impossible a continuance of the social and economic order of the nineteenth century. But they have no plan for replacing it.

No Will to Defend

We are thus faced in Europe with the spectacle of an extraordinary weakness on the part of the great capitalist class, which has emerged from the industrial triumphs of the nineteenth century, and seemed a very few years ago our all-powerful master. The terror and personal timidity of the individuals of this class is now so great, their confidence in their place in society and in their necessity to the social organism so diminished, that they are the easy

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victims of intimidation. This was not so in the England twenty-five years ago, any more than it is now [1920] in the United States. Then the capitalists believed in themselves, in their value to society, in the propriety of their continued existence in the full enjoyment of their riches and the unlimited exercise of their power. Now they tremble before every insult; — call them pro-Germans, international financiers, or profiteers, and they will give you any ransom you choose to ask not to speak of them so harshly. They allow themselves to be ruined and altogether undone by their own instruments, governments of their own making, and a press of which they are the proprietors. Perhaps it is historically true that no order of society ever perishes save by its own hand. In the complexer world of Western Europe the Immanent Will may achieve its ends more subtly and bring in the revolution no less inevitably through a Klotz or a George than by the intellectualisms, too ruthless and self-conscious for us, of the bloodthirsty philosophers of Russia.

The inflationism of the currency systems of Europe has proceeded to extraordinary lengths. The various belligerent Governments, unable, or too timid or too short-sighted to secure from loans or taxes the resources they required, have printed notes for the balance. In Russia and Austria-Hungary this process has reached a point where for the purpose of foreign trade the currency is practically valueless. The Polish mark can be bought for about three cents and the Austrian crown for less than two cents, but they cannot be sold at all. The German mark is worth less than four cents on the exchanges. In most of the other countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe the real position is nearly as bad. The currency of Italy has fallen to little more than a half of its nominal value in spite of its being still subject to some degree of regulation; French currency maintains an uncertain market; and even sterling is seriously diminished in present value and impaired in its future prospects.

A Sentimental Value

But while these currencies enjoy a precarious value abroad, they have never entirely lost, not even in Russia, their purchasing power at home. A sentiment of trust in the legal money of the State is so deeply implanted in the citizens of all countries that they cannot but believe that some day this money must recover a part at least of its former value. To their minds it appears that value is inherent in money as such, and they do not apprehend that the real

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wealth, which this money might have stood for, has been dissipated once and for all. This sentiment is supported by the various legal regulations with which the Governments endeavor to control internal prices, and so to preserve some purchasing power for their legal tender. Thus the force of law preserves a measure of immediate purchasing power over some commodities and the force of sentiment and custom maintains, especially amongst peasants, a willingness to hoard paper which is really worthless.

The presumption of a spurious value for the currency, by the force of law expressed in the regulation of prices, contains in itself, however, the seeds of final economic decay, and soon dries up the sources of ultimate supply. If a man is compelled to exchange the fruits of his labors for paper which, as experience soon teaches him, he cannot use to purchase what he requires at a price comparable to that which he has received for his own products, he will keep his produce for himself, dispose of it to his friends and neighbors as a favor, or relax his efforts in producing it. A system of compelling the exchange of commodities at what is not their real relative value not only relaxes production, but leads finally to the waste and inefficiency of barter. If, however, a government refrains from regulation and allows matters to take their course, essential commodities soon attain a level of price out of the reach of all but the rich, the worthlessness of the money becomes apparent, and the fraud upon the public can be concealed no longer.

The effect on foreign trade of price-regulation and profiteer-hunting as cures for inflation is even worse. Whatever may be the case at home, the currency must soon reach its real level abroad, with the result that prices inside and outside the country lose their normal adjustment. The price of imported commodities, when converted at the current rate of exchange, is far in excess of the local price, so that many essential goods will not be imported at all by private agency, and must be provided by the government, which, in reselling the goods below cost price, plunges thereby a little further into insolvency. The bread subsidies, now almost universal throughout Europe, are the leading example of this phenomenon. ◈

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7. The Pragmatic Sanction of Flux

CLARENCE B. CARSON

. . . A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solution, from bad a priori *reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards . . . facts, towards action and towards power.*

—WILLIAM JAMES, 1907

Instead of a closed universe, science now presents us with one infinite in space and time, having no limits here or there, at this end, so to speak, or at that, and as infinitely complex in internal structure as it is infinite in extent. Hence it is also an open world. . . . And change rather than fixity is now a measure of "reality" or energy of being; change is omnipresent.

—JOHN DEWEY, 1920

HOW DIFFICULT it was to launch the bulk of Americans on the flight from reality! What obstacles were met with in the efforts to turn Americans into the path of melioristic reform! Only a reformer of some years back can really appreciate the immense energy and ingenuity that went into providing a new outlook for Americans and getting them to accept it. Utopian visions appealed to some, but there was still the difficulty of convincing people that these dreams could be turned into reality. Philosophical thought could be cut loose from its moorings in reality, but the generality of men, probably even intellectuals, did not know about it. European ideologies proliferated, but Americans, when and if they heard of them, tended to reject them. No great violence will be done to the reality to describe it figuratively. Hence, Americans clung tenaciously to constitutionalism, to private property, to free

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enterprise, to the individual way, and to the belief in an order in the universe.

The tasks of those who advanced reformist ideas in the late years of the nineteenth century and the early years of this century were manifold. They had to overcome the inertia which blocks the acceptance of any innovation. They had not only to implant a new version of reality but also to convince many people that they had based their lives upon an illusion rather than upon reality. Moreover, they had to counter the intellectual trends of the times. In our day, we are accustomed to the bulk of professors, teachers, preachers, journalists, and so on being favorable to reform. It was not so in the period under consideration. Colleges, schools, religious denominations, and publications had not yet been won to the melioristic view.

The Trend Toward Nationalism

Indeed, the leading trend in social thought in the latter part of the nineteenth century was diametrically opposed to meliorism. This trend has been called by several names – naturalism, social Darwinism, rugged individualism, among others. Naturalism may be a better generic name for a whole range of thought at the time, embracing the arts and sciences as well as social thought. Social Darwinism may be understood as naturalistic thought in its relation to society. One historian says that the cosmology of the naturalists "was compounded out of the nebular hypothesis of Kant and Laplace, the uniformitarian geology of Lyell, and the organic evolution of Darwin. It assumed universal change under natural law."[1] Social Darwinism, on the other hand, is usually applied to the particular social application of evolutionary ideas by Herbert Spencer and his American disciple, William Graham Sumner. Since this particular usage is common, it may be appropriate to discuss the naturalistic view first, and social Darwinism as a variant of it.

In essence, naturalism was an account of reality in natural terms. That is, the earth, man, life, inanimate matter, and the universe were viewed as the result of natural processes. As evolutionists, naturalists turned away from any enduring reality and focused upon change. But they took with them an interest in natural law from the older outlook. The major impetus of scientists for several centuries had been the quest for natural law. Naturalists were full to overflowing with the scientific (or scientistic) animus, and they contin-

[1] Stow Persons, *American Minds: A History of Ideas* (New York: Holt, 1958), p. 222.

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ued the search for laws. But a most important change had occurred in the conception of natural law. To earlier thinkers, indeed to virtually the whole tradition of Western thought, natural law had been something fixed in the universe. It was that enduring order in the universe as it is known to man. To naturalists, natural law was the law by which changes occurred, the law, or laws, of evolutionary development.

Natural law was active rather than fixed or passive. It was felt through *forces* at work in the universe. Naturalists gave their attention either to discovering and expounding the stages of development or to describing the forces which produced the changes. In short, they were greatly concerned with what was *determining* the course and direction of changes that had been and (presumably) were occurring. Naturalists were determinists, then; they pictured man's actions as products of forces within or without him but, whichever, beyond his control.

These interpretations amounted to a radical transformation of the significance of natural law. Natural law as order-in-the-universe has ever been a liberating concept. It has served as the basis for limiting governments, for freeing economies, as foundation for positive law, as the basis of government by law, and as the substructure for peaceful relations among nations and peoples. But natural laws as forces are tyrannical, though not necessarily arbitrarily so. That is, natural laws then become active rather than passive, subject to change rather than enduring, founts of change rather than bases for rational order. Naturalism pervades the thinking of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Emile Zola, William Graham Sumner, John W. Draper, Frederick Jackson Turner, Theodore Dreiser, and many other writers and thinkers.

The point that concerns us here is the opposition of such an outlook to reform. If change occurs as a result of forces, if the course and direction of change is determined by processes beyond the power of man to alter, if social changes are the product of such processes, reform is impossible. Human intervention in the process is virtually impossible, and, were it possible to any extent, it would be undesirable, for it would only deter the beneficent course of evolution — or so the more optimistic naturalists thought.

William Graham Sumner

The social view of the significance of evolution that was most congenial to the prevailing American way, and to many Americans, was that of William Graham

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Sumner. His views, as I have suggested, are often cited as the epitome of social Darwinism. Sumner was a thoroughgoing Darwinian, naturalistic in emphasis, and his works are replete with references to "forces" at work upon and within society. Yet the views which he set forth appeared to be in keeping with American institutions and basic beliefs. For example, in defending a higher stage of civilization, he said:

> It sets free individual energy, and while the social bond gains in scope and variety, it also gains in elasticity, for the solidarity of the group is broken up and the individual may work out his own ends by his own means. . . .[2]

He defends private property, and praises virtues which are undeniably those admired by many Americans of his day. Thus,

> The only two things which really tell on the welfare of man on earth are hard work and self-denial (in technical language, labor and capital), and these tell most when they are brought to bear directly upon the effort to earn an honest living, to accumulate capital, and to bring up a family to be industrious and self-denying in their turn.[3]

[2] William G. Sumner, "Sociology," *American Thought: Civil War to World War I*, Perry Miller, ed. (New York: Rinehart, 1954), p. 81.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Moreover, he conceived that sociology would provide facts and theories which would support the American system. It could answer one of the most important questions, he thought. "Shall we, in our general social policy, pursue the effort to realize more completely that constitutional liberty for which we have been struggling throughout modern history . . .?"[4]

Short Shrift for Reformers

Most important for the matter under consideration, Sumner held an uncompromising position to the effect that melioristic reform was practically impossible. Of utopians and socialists, he said: "These persons, vexed with the intricacies of social problems and revolting against the facts of the social order, take upon themselves the task of inventing a new and better world. They brush away all which troubles us men and create a world free from annoying limitations and conditions – in their imagination."[5] Why can't men simply conceive a world of the sort they want and then set out to build it? Sumner offers many reasons – human nature, the nature of the world, natural law – but the primary one was of a different order. This was the argument from the evolution of society.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

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Specifically, society had reached an industrial stage of development. Sumner conceived society as an organism, and industrial society-as-organism was highly and complexly organized. To talk of altering this organization and instituting another by taking thought was utter folly. Men do not control it;

> It controls us all because we are all in it. It creates the conditions of our existence, sets the limits of our social activity, regulates the bonds of our social relations, determines our conceptions of good and evil, suggests our life-philosophy, molds our inherited political institutions, and reforms the oldest and toughest customs, like marriage and property.

In short, "the industrial organization" exercises an "all-pervading control over human life. . . ."[6] He offers a technological explanation of how this all-pervading organization came about. "The great inventions both make the intension of the organization possible and make it inevitable, with all its consequences, whatever they may be."[7] The only thing that men can constructively do is this: "We have to make up our minds to it, adjust ourselves to it, and sit down and live with it."[8]

[6] William G. Sumner, "The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over," in *ibid.*, p. 94.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[8] *Ibid.*

The Sociologist Emerges

The perils of the sociological mode of thought are great; Sumner's premises had led him to a strange conclusion. In the first essay cited, originally published in 1881, he had boldly asserted that sociological knowledge would expose the tyranny of reformism and demonstrate the blessings of liberty. Yet, in the second essay cited, published in 1894, he was opposing reform by proclaiming that all of us are caught in the web of the social organization, and he did so in words and phrases that would have been worthy of Karl Marx. Sumner's thought is confused and contradictory. Much that he wrote has an individualistic tenor, but he was committed by his mode of the search for truth to the study of thought in terms of society. His confusion was further complicated by the use of analogies drawn from the biological thought of Darwin, thought concerned rightly with organisms, but which could not be appropriately transferred to the consideration of society. Natural law had been moved into the historical stream to become force. Thus, Sumner's conclusion derives from the premises he was using, but it was hardly propitious for human freedom. His assumptions had induced myopia — the myopia which perceives society-as-organism and natural-

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law-as-force – and he was opposing flights from reality by arguments drawn from a distorted view of reality.

Be that as it may, the evolutionary premises had been used to erect an apparently formidable argument against reformism. The Darwinian modes of progress – competition for available resources, struggle for life, survival of the fittest – natural law interpreted as force, and the prevailing trends ran counter to reform. If one rejected these, he was hardly nearer to a position which made reformism intellectually feasible, for the traditional view of reality was an even more formidable obstacle to such reformist visions than social Darwinism.

The Turning Point

But could the evolutionary ideas not be turned to the advantage of meliorism? They could be, and were. Moreover, those who turned the arguments could appear to be on the side of the angels – that is, in favor of freedom, in favor of the amelioration of circumstances, in favor of humanity. The chances are good that reformers did not generally see this clearly at the time, but social Darwinism made an excellent target, and the repudiation of this pseudo-philosophy could bring down with it much of the traditional philosophy which it had subsumed. At any rate, something like this did occur.

Before examining these latter developments, however, it is in order to show how the evolutionary obstacle to reform was overturned. Social Darwinism carried with it a heavy freight of assumptions about continuous change, stages of development in civilization, and organicism. Who could say what the next stage of development would be like? Something that was impossible at one stage could become highly probable, even inevitable, at the next stage. Sumner admitted as much in his discussion of private property. He believed that the development of protections to private property had been a great advance. However, it "may give way at a future time to some other institution which will grow up by imperceptible stages out of the efforts of men to contend successfully with existing evils. . . ."[9]

Lester Frank Ward

Lester Frank Ward, a contemporary of Sumner, a sociologist and meliorist, proclaimed that a new stage in evolution had been emerging for millennia, and he believed that it was ready to be brought to fruition. The new stage was the "advent with man of the

[9] Sumner, "Sociology," *ibid.*, p. 82.

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thinking, knowing, foreseeing, calculating, designing, inventing and constructing faculty, which is wanting in lower creatures. . . ." It repealed "the law of nature and enacted in its stead the psychologic law, or law of mind."[10] He held that men could now take over the direction of social development, and that they could shape it to human ends. His work was a call to men to take up their rightful place in the universe and bring nature and natural law to heel:

> . . . When nature comes to be regarded as passive and man as active . . . , when human action is recognised as the most important of all forms of action, and when the power of the human intellect over vital, psychic and social phenomena is practically conceded, then, and then only, can man justly claim to have risen out of the animal and fully to have entered the human stage of development.[11]

Ward retained the evolutionary frame, the focus upon society, the progressive tendency of naturalism, but he turned the argument against the possibility of reform and opened the way for the advance of meliorism. He drew attention away from the enduring features of man and the universe even more emphatically than Sumner had done. The alternatives which he offered can be put this way: either men in society are controlled and determined by natural laws of social development or they are free to alter and control the development of society.

Probable Errors

It should be emphasized that the analysis of both Sumner and Ward is gross. Ward had no more proved that any particular melioristic reform was possible than had Sumner proved that it was impossible. Both of them were at least three removes from the relevant reality. In the first place, the arguments are conducted at too general and abstract a level. One is reminded of Zeno's paradox which purports to prove that there can be no change. The problem lies in the premises upon which the argument is based, not in reality. Second, both arguments rely upon a most dubious extension of evolutionary ideas. Third, both thinkers conceived society organically rather than viewing the matter from the point of view of individuals. Moreover, both appear to have been confused, or at least confusing, about the nature of natural law.

[10] Quoted in Henry S. Commager, *The American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 206.

[11] Lester F. Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor," *American Ideas*, Gerald N. Grob and Robert N. Beck, eds., II (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 129.

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Even so, Ward had opened the way to reformist efforts within the contemporary outlook. Other reformers took advantage of the opening to press through the defenses and advance their reforms.

Developing a New Philosophy of Pragmatism

But reformers needed more than the vision which utopia provided and the theoretical possibility of reform. They needed a philosophy to replace older views and one which would buttress meliorism. Such a philosophy was provided by *pragmatism*. Pragmatism offered refutations of traditional philosophy by proclaiming its irrelevance, was futuristic in its orientation, and made boundless reconstruction the aim and purpose of thought. Most important, it made meliorism intellectually respectable, a necessary step to draw in the bulk of the intellectuals, and it made it possible for thinkers to advance reform without avowing any particular ideology.

Pragmatism stands for an approved method and attitude today. Not only are intellectuals proud to be known as pragmatists, but they bestow what they conceive to be one of the highest accolades upon politicians by describing them as pragmatic. The word has long since passed into the vernacular, and many people use it without any clear conception of its meaning. It is sometimes employed as if it were a synonym of practical, and it is adopted as a mode of thought by those who have given little or no thought to philosophy.

The word was given philosophical currency by Charles Sanders Peirce, a rather obscure American thinker of the latter part of the nineteenth century. But it was popularized by William James. When this had occurred, Peirce abandoned the word, "pragmatism," for a new formulation, "pragmaticism."[12] John Dewey, who was the most prolific writer of this school of thought, called his variant of pragmatism, "instrumentalism." This left James as the only major exponent of pragmatism who used that name for his philosophy. There were important differences, particularly between Peirce and the other two, but these do not concern the basic meaning of pragmatism. Each of them contributed to its development. As one writer says, "It suffices . . . to say that if Peirce may be regarded as the Socrates of pragmatism, and James as its Plato, Dewey is certainly its Aris-

[12] See Charles S. Peirce, "What Pragmatism Is," *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, William Barrett, ed., I (New York: Random House, 1962), 138-40.

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totle."[13] This may be taken to imply, also, that pragmatists claimed to be constructing a new philosophy as important for the future ages as the ancient philosophy had been for those from that time.

Peirce "framed the theory that a *conception*, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and *there is absolutely nothing more in it.*"[14] This was what he meant by pragmatism. With his gift for simplification and clarity, James defined pragmatism in the following way:

> To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve — what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.[15]

Dewey defined the same concept *instrumentally:*

> *If* ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems are instrumental to an active reorganization of the given environment, to a removal of some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity and value lies in accomplishing this work. If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true.[16]

A Radical Departure

How radical pragmatism was (and is) may not appear from these definitions. There is an ambiguity in these formulations of the method. Conceivably, it might be a method for discovering truth, finding principles, uncovering laws that are in the universe. One might proceed from "effects" to their causes, and from thence to the order which makes for regularity of the operation of cause and effect. If this were what is involved, pragmatism would be only a particular formulation of the inductive method of reasoning. It

[13] Henry D. Aiken, "Introduction," *ibid.*, p. 49.

[14] Peirce, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[15] William James, "What Pragmatism Means," *Pragmatism and American Culture*, Gail Kennedy, ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950), p. 13.

[16] John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), p. 156.

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must be made clear, however, that pragmatism was not intended by its proponents to be fitted into any traditional mode of thought, that it was not intended as a means for finding truth, order, or regularity, that it was founded upon a counter view of reality.

Pragmatists were not concerned to discover any fixity or absolutes, nor were they building upon traditional philosophy. On the contrary, a part of the work of all three men under consideration was devoted to refuting (and denouncing) absolutes, fixities, and traditions. Peirce declared that pragmatism "will serve to show that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish . . . or else is downright absurd. . . ."[17] In making expositions of his philosophy, James alternated between repudiations of rationalism, idealism, objectivity, and metaphysics and affirmations of pragmatism. Of the belief in the Absolute, he said, "it clashes with other truths of mine. . . . It happens to be associated with a kind of logic of which I am the enemy; I find that it entangles me in metaphysical paradoxes. . . ." Therefore, "I personally just give up the Absolute."[18] Dewey points out that in the older philosophy truth and falsity "are thought of as fixed, ready-made static properties of things themselves. . . . Such a notion lies at the back of the head of everyone who has, in however an indirect way, been a recipient of the ancient and medieval tradition. This view is radically challenged by the pragmatic conception of truth, and the impossibility of reconciliation or compromise is . . . the cause of the shock occasioned by the newer theory."[19]

Ever-Changing "Truth"

Truth is not something pre-existing to be discovered, according to the pragmatists; it is brought within the evolutionary frame of the continually changing. It is not fixed, but changing; not pre-existent, but evolving; not discovered, but made. Peirce says that the *summum bonum* consists "in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be *destined*. . . ."[20] James says, "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events."[21] Elsewhere, he makes clear the relationship of this no-

[17] Peirce, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[18] James, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[19] Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-59.

[20] Peirce, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

[21] William James, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, I, 194.

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tion to the concept of evolution: "When the whole universe seems only to be making itself valid and to be still incomplete (else why its ceaseless changing?) why, of all things, should knowing be exempt? Why should it not be making itself valid like everything else?"[22] John Dewey says "that there is change going on all the time, that there is movement within each thing in seeming repose; and that since the process is veiled from perception the way to know it is to bring the thing into novel circumstances until change becomes evident. In short, the thing which is to be accepted and paid heed to is not what is originally given but that which emerges. . . ."[23]

To the pragmatists, then, the universe was open. Reality was not something given, something to be discovered, something with fixed feature; it was open, alterable, and changing. For Peirce, according to one interpreter, "laws, like habits, are 'emergent' principles which characterize only certain limited phases of the evolutionary process. In this sense, laws themselves are mutable. . . . There is, however, no universal law of development. . . . The universe as a whole is fundamentally open-ended. . . ."[24] According to Dewey, fixity, where it apparently existed, was not something to be observed, recorded, and admired. "Rather, the experimental method tries to break down apparent fixities and to induce changes. The form that remains unchanged to sense, the form of seed or tree, is regarded not as the key to knowledge of the thing, but as a wall, an obstruction to be broken down."[25] What were once conceived as enduring realities Dewey would have us view as temporary obstacles.

Primarily a Method

Pragmatists agreed with one another that theirs was primarily a method. In terms of the above elucidation, it should be clear that it was a method for operating in a world of flux and change. Change and development do not adequately describe the world view of these pragmatists. The universe must also be described as in a state of flux, for there is no necessary direction to its development. Men located in a world where things are forever fluctuating may be likened to someone embarked on a voyage into perpetually uncharted seas. There would be great need, in these circumstances, for something by which to steer. Peirce, James, and Dewey proposed that pragmatism should be that guide.

[22] William James, "A World of Pure Experience," *ibid.*, p. 235.

[23] Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[24] Aiken, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

[25] Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

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They accepted a method, then, to replace the knowledge they had repudiated. The model for that method, or so they believed, was the scientific method. Someone has observed that pragmatism is not so much a philosophy as a way of doing without a philosophy. With equal justice, it should be observed that pragmatism is not so much a method for acquiring knowledge as a means of operating in lieu of knowledge and certainty. At any rate, pragmatism resulted from the efforts of the founders to render the scientific method, as they understood it, into a philosophy. These men were conscious that this latter was what they were doing. Peirce declared that after the "gibberish" of metaphysics had been swept away, "what will remain of philosophy will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences. . . ."[26]

Confusion of the Scientific Method with Technology

It should be made clear, though, that the scientific method James and Dewey, at least, had in mind was not the method as it received its classic formulation in the seventeenth century. That was a method designed for and aimed at *discovering* and *describing* the laws in the universe – what is today vestigially referred to as "pure" science. Rather, the conceptions of the pragmatists were based on the technological applications of science. The scientist, as technologist, is concerned with ways to reshape, reform, and reorder natural things. Such technologists have had (and are having) remarkable successes. It has been stated so often that it is now a cliché – but it will bear repeating in this context – that these technological achievements rest upon prior achievements in "basic" science. The meaning is, or should be, that technologists achieve their effects because of a knowledge of underlying laws which preceded their labors. Their work rests upon a foundation of laws, regularities, and established connections.

This is precisely the point which James and Dewey, particularly Dewey, missed. They apparently thought that the technologist was doing what he appeared to be doing – experimenting at random until he came up with something, then going on to other modifications and experiments. Dewey conceived of the scientist not as discoverer but as innovator. Scientific knowledge is obtained, he declared, by the "deliberate institution of a definite and specified course of change. *The* method of

[26] Peirce, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

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physical inquiry is to introduce some change in order to see what other change ensues; the correlation between these changes . . . constitutes the definite and desired object of knowledge."[27] He made clear that he thought that there was only one valid scientific method, and it was the method used both in laboratories and in industries. "Moreover, there is no difference in logical principle between the method of science and the method pursued in technologies."[28]

At any rate, James and Dewey took what they thought was the scientific method from the limited arena of applied science and gave it universal application as *the* method. They attempted to make experimentation into a way of life. Ideas and concepts were conceived, in this context, as a scientist was believed to conceive of hypotheses, that is, as instruments of change. As James put it,

> *Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest.* We don't lie back upon them, we move forward, and, on occasion, make nature over again by their aid.[29]

[27] John Dewey, "The Quest for Certainty," *The Golden Age of American Philosophy*, Charles Frankel, ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 414.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 414-15.

[29] James, "What Pragmatism Means," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Dewey spells out the implications of this belief:

> . . . Here it is enough to note that notions, theories, systems . . . must be regarded as hypotheses. They are to be accepted as bases of actions which test them, not as finalities. . . . They are tools. As in the case of all tools, their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work shown in the consequences of their use.[30]

As tools, then, ideas are relative to the uses to which they are put. If the point does not emerge, it must be stated: pragmatists are relativists.

John Dewey Spells It Out

The importance of pragmatism for social reform was made abundantly clear in the numerous works of John Dewey. The indications are that Charles Sanders Peirce was interested in technical philosophy rather than reform. William James was more concerned with the psychology of belief than with social reform. It was left to Dewey, then, to apply pragmatism to ameliorative reform. He is best known as an educational reformer, but he was much concerned with all sorts of reform. He may well have been the central figure in the promotion of reformism in America.

[30] Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p. 145.

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Dewey openly advocated that philosophy should be reoriented so as to perform a social function, that is, to make over men and society. Too long, he thought, philosophers had pretended to have some special method for arriving at truth, to be concerned with Reality beyond reality. The time had come for philosophy to come out in the open and get on with the task it had been covertly performing all along. "Philosophy which surrenders its somewhat barren monopoly of dealings with Ultimate and Absolute Reality will find a compensation in enlightening the moral forces which move mankind and in contributing to the aspiration of men to attain to a more ordered and intelligent happiness."[31] More bluntly, and in the form of rhetorical questions, he proclaimed what he conceived to be the real end of philosophy:

> . . . But would not the elimination of these traditional problems permit philosophy to devote itself to a more fruitful and more needed task? Would it not encourage philosophy to face the great social and moral defects and troubles from which humanity suffers, to concentrate its attention upon clearing up the causes and exact nature of these evils and upon developing a clear idea of better social possibilities; in short upon projecting an idea or ideal which . . . would be used as a method of understanding and rectifying social ills?[32]

Despite the appearance of caution in formulating the ideas, there should be no doubt that Dewey thought philosophy should perform a melioristic function.

Reshape the Environment

In sum, then, the pragmatists had denigrated and repudiated traditional philosophy. They held forth the vision of a universe in a continuous state of flux. Such order as existed would have to be wrought by man, and no order would be final or complete. Man's task was to reshape and remake himself and his environment. There were no pre-existing rules – no fixed principles, no enduring laws, no underlying order – to guide or restrain him in his endeavor. Traditionalists had been wrong in believing that there were static natural laws; naturalists had been wrong in thinking there were forces-as-laws governing development. Pragmatists affirmed a radical new freedom – the freedom to reshape reality according to how they would have it be. The method for operating in this flux was to be pragmatism, the method of continual experimentation in moving toward their indefinite goals.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

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A philosophy had been formed to buttress and promote melioristic reform.

One other point needs to be made. It has often been claimed that reformism is alien to America. There is a sense in which this is true. That is, it is alien to the system of constitutionalism developed in America, and to the beliefs by which it was buttressed. But it was not alien in the sense of being foisted upon Americans by foreigners. Instead, the reformist bent was established by citizens of America, in the main. This is most important to understanding the nature of reformism in America. Insofar as it was pragmatic, it was not specifically socialism nor communism. Pragmatists do not define goals in such rigid fashion as this. Of course, the reforms have been socialistic in tendency, but this can be ascribed to the utopian visions which reformers imbibed, which were socialistic, rather than to a consciously worked out program to achieve socialism. Of course, other assumptions, to be taken up later, bent the reformer toward socialism. But the pragmatist, *qua* pragmatist, just continues to experiment, not toward a final goal but toward the general goal of growth and improvement which is never to end. ◈

The next article in this series will concern "The Deactivation of History."

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Source of Natural Law

THIS TENDENCY to the conservation of society, which we now expressed in a rude manner, and which tendency is in agreement with the nature of the human intellect, is the source of *Jus*, or Natural Law, properly so called. To this *Jus* belongs the rule of abstaining from that which belongs to other persons; and if we have in our possession anything of others, the restitution of it, or of any gain which we have made from it; the fulfilling of promises, and the reparation of damage done by fault; and the recognition of certain things as meriting punishment among men.

HUGO GROTIUS, *On the Rights of War and Peace* (1625)

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GERDA'S EMPIRE

REBECCA WEST

Rebecca West's Black Lamb and Grey Falcon (*Viking Press, 1941*) *analyzes the dictator complex exemplified in Gerda, encountered by Miss West and her husband in their travels through Yugoslavia.*

GERDA has no sense of process. That is what is the matter with Gerda. She wants the result without doing any of the work that goes to make it. . . . She is angry because we have some money. She feels that it might just as well belong to her . . . For her, the money might as easily have been attached to her as to us by a movement as simple as that which pastes a label on a trunk . . . As she has no sense of what goes to bring people love, or friendship, or distinction, or wealth, it seems to her that the whole world is enjoying undeserved benefits; and in a universe where all is arbitrary, it might just as well happen that the injustice was pushed a little further and that all these benefits were taken from other people, leaving them nothing, and transferred to her, giving her everything.

Given the premise that the universe is purely arbitrary, that there is no causality at work anywhere, there is nothing absurd in that proposal. This is the conqueror's point of view . . . Let us admit it, for a little while the whole of our world may belong to Gerda. She will snatch it out of hands too well bred and compassionate and astonished to defend it. What we must remember is that she will not be able to keep it. For her contempt for the process makes her unable to conduct any process . . . To go up in an aeroplane and drop bombs is a simple use of an elaborate process that has already been developed.

But you cannot administer a country on this principle . . . Gerda's empire . . . will be an object of fear and nothing else. For this reason, I believe that Gerda's empire cannot last long. But while it lasts it will be terrible. And what it leaves when it passes will also be terrible. For we cannot hope for anything but a succession of struggles for leadership among men whose minds will have been unfitted for leadership by the existence of tyranny and the rupture of European tradition, until slowly and painfully, the nations re-emerge, civilization re-emerges. ◈

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Self-Discipline: Free Choice: Responsibility

MALLORY CROSS

ALTHOUGH strongly independent by nature, my friend thought certain government welfare projects were necessary – because he had never heard of an alternative. As I presented the libertarian viewpoint, he listened attentively, but very soon caught me up.

"Freedom? Are you sure freedom is always good?"

"Oh, yes," I replied innocently.

"Well, some people want freedom to line their own pockets, to run riot and steal and get rich without working. They want freedom to do exactly as they please!"

"Wait a minute: I should have said, 'equal freedom.' Each man should have equal freedom to run his own life without interference from others."

"Then you want to give everybody equal freedom to do exactly as he pleases? To steal or attack others?"

"No, I said *without interference from others*. Every man should have equal freedom to undertake creative activities, so long as he doesn't interfere with other men's creative work."

"Then freedom is not always good for everyone. And you do not really want to grant *all* men freedom."

"Not if it means interfering with someone else's creative activity. Freedom must be accompanied by responsibility."

"Ah," said my friend, "*freedom with responsibility*: that is a different picture altogether!"

In the years since that conversation, I have made the same discovery that anyone who is growing in libertarian understanding must eventually make. If we talk only about "freedom for all," or "equal freedom" or even "freedom to be creative," we may be misunderstood.

Socialists want freedom to be creative, too: they want to create

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an egalitarian society where men work for the "common good," and each receives according to his need – no more, no less – regardless of the size of his contribution. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has been creative in that field for over forty-five years.

What, then, is the essence of human life at its best? What can we be for, in a positive way, that will not be misunderstood? All men have one goal in common, regardless of differences of race, creed, or political philosophy. All men want to be happy, to have a better life. That is the "common good."

St. Augustine said in 390 A.D., "Error comes about when we follow an aim which does not lead us where we wish to go." The question is, how can we achieve happiness, the "common good," without falling into error? The best I can do in answer is this: *Combine self-discipline and freedom of choice with responsibility.*

Three Aspects of Self-Discipline

Self-discipline is admired in all countries, especially in the USSR. There, each citizen is expected to fulfill his obligations, and to criticize his own shortcomings in public meetings. In all nations the discipline of parading troops is admired. Each soldier makes an effort to keep in perfect step, knowing he will be called to account if he fails. Here we have two examples of discipline and responsibility imposed on the individual by threat of force, rather than his own free will, or conscience, or desire for betterment. His freedom of choice is narrowly limited: to accept or refuse to comply with another's will, under threat of punishment. (Note that punishment invariably involves a further restriction of free choice.)

Self-discipline means "self-teaching," or "self-government," or "self-chastisement."

Self-teaching means not only learning facts and ideas, but also learning from experience. Each must set his own goals (have an incentive), and bear the burden of any error in his choice of goals or in his efforts to achieve them.

Self-government means not only controlling one's temper, but also directing one's choice of goals and choosing the means to reach them. It includes the will to deprive oneself of a short-run good in order to attain a greater good in the long-run.

Self-chastisement means not only admitting a mistake and backtracking when one has made an error; but also refusing to follow passions, relationships, or ideas once recognized as erroneous, i.e., as means which will not lead to the desired end. This may be called

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"punishment" by those who are shortsighted, but chastisement also means "correction." Thus, it is intimately related to learning and governing: learning prepares one to choose wisely; governing is the act of choice; chastisement is correction of wrong choice.

Freedom of choice must therefore be combined with all three meanings of self-discipline. "Free" means "unrestrained" or "unlimited." "Choice" means "the act of choosing from among available alternatives." Combining the words, we then define *freedom of choice* as: "the unrestrained act of choosing from among available alternatives." When the act of choosing is not restrained by other persons, then the only limitations are those imposed by nature and our own will. However, we must remember that our choices may not necessarily be good from other people's point of view. Here we come to the concept of responsibility.

Answerable for Our Actions

Responsible means "answerable." We all talk to ourselves sometimes, but generally an answer is elicited in response to a question from someone else. Man does live in society, in company with others. As soon as we choose a course of action and start moving toward it, we find other people in our path. Some of them may have no business there; others may have a perfect right to ask, "Where do you think you're going? How are you going to get there?"

Your answer may draw one of several reactions. "Do what you like; it doesn't interest me." Or perhaps, "May I come along? I'm going that way myself." Or: "You're crazy – you don't know what you're talking about!" (Possibly he is right; we had better have a little talk with that one.) But there may be one more standing in the path: "You can't go this way because I refuse to permit it." (This may be your government, but it may also be your wife or your conscience or your banker.)

Family, friends, and government can all take up those various positions: indifference, cooperation, warning, or opposition. Now it may be that the just answer from you should be, "You're on the wrong track." (The indifferent one perhaps ought to be interested.) But we cannot ignore them, even if the error be theirs rather than ours. All those who demand an answer must be satisfied, or we shall not be allowed to get on toward our goal unhampered – if at all.

Responsibility is a habit of character that looks far ahead,

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that tries to foresee what obstacle or opposition – justified or not – may arise, and prepare to meet it with satisfactory answers. A responsible person does not start a vacation in his car without seeing that there is air in the tires, gas in the tank, money in his pocket, and an open road ahead.

Each time we encounter firm opposition the cycle of self-discipline, choice, responsibility begins anew. These qualities are needed daily and hourly as long as we live in this world. The greater our self-discipline, the less will our own weakness and ignorance delay us. The wider area of choice we have, the less serious will be any particular obstacle to our constructive purposes. The more responsible we are, the farther-seeing we will learn to be, tracing our route ahead of time to avoid insurmountable barriers.

Let us work continually to develop and use these qualities in ourselves. Here is an area where we can get action now, without waiting for the other fellow. Even in the area of choice, we are not exercising our freedom to the fullest unless we always choose the highest good as we see it, instead of moving with the herd. This means fighting our own battles and cheerfully accepting the consequences.

Individually, all men seek happiness. But how can we achieve the "common good"? It will be revealed progressively as one by one we learn to combine self-discipline with freedom of choice and responsibility. ◈

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Seek The Good

ALL WISH TO BE HAPPY, but not all are able so to be. Not all wish to live rightly, which is the only state of will that deserves a happy life . . . .

All . . . seek the good and shun evil, but they follow different aims because they have different opinions about the good. If a man seeks what ought not to be sought, he errs, even though he would not seek it unless he thought it was good. . . . Therefore, in so far as all men seek a happy life, they are not in error.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *The Problem of Free Choice* (Circa 390 A.D.)

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THE INSTITUTE of Economic Affairs in Great Britain, which is a nonparty group of economists "held together by a common interest in the working of free economic institutions," has put out a remarkable paperback book, *Rebirth of Britain* (Pan Books, Ltd., 8 Headfort Place, London S.W.I.; 5 shillings). Eighteen authors have contributed to it, and some of their essays would perplex any classical liberal of the nineteenth century. The key to both the tone and the strategy of the papers is the fact that a nation which is far gone in state welfarism gives its citizens very little room in which to maneuver in their efforts to restore individual freedom of action. Because of the situation in Britain, the contributors to this book do not argue for an immediate restoration of free capitalist institutions. Instead, they concentrate on taking their adversaries on the flank, proposing only "a drastic pruning of unnecessary state welfare services." The key to that statement is the word "unnecessary." Who is to say?

Well, an "unnecessary" state service in our various authors' estimation is one that does not permit a voluntary choice between private and public welfare agencies. This implicit definition controls the strategy of the *Rebirth of Britain* authors. They don't really advocate dismantling any of the features of the welfare state. But they do suggest the idea of "contracting out," presumably on a basis that would still compel all people to maintain some form of insurance protection against such things as sickness and old age.

In this book we find Arthur Seldon advocating enough government welfarism to provide some state support to "people with low incomes." But he would not provide this support through free services. Instead, he would have

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the government give to the poor "generous cash money grants or vouchers to enable them to assert themselves in the market place by exerting a choice between state and private welfare services." The idea would be to put the welfare agencies of the state into renewed competition with private insurance agencies, private schools (or "public," as they are called in England), and private businesses.

The voucher idea has been advanced in the United States by Professor Milton Friedman, who thinks it could be adapted to aid to education without putting the government into the business of supporting colleges with grants of money that might corrupt the curriculum. Obviously, in America the creation of a system of higher educational vouchers would increase the sum total of state welfarism. This is sufficient to raise the hackles of libertarians. But in the existing British context, a voucher system might very well represent an advance toward libertarianism over what they now have.

This would seem to be especially true in the case of the British health services. If a British citizen were to be permitted to "contract out" of dependence on the apparatus of the National Health Service, wouldn't it be a net gain for freedom?

Counterbarrage to Planners

Rebirth of Britain was provoked by a special issue of *Encounter* magazine in which sixteen writers under the general editorship of Arthur Koestler wrote on economic planning, education, state welfarism, and related topics. The Koestler group, a bunch of latter-day Fabians who lamented the coming "suicide" of Britain simply because the state hadn't managed to conscript more than a fifth of the national wealth for compulsory welfare schemes, advocated a far greater direction of the national energy from the top. This so appalled the economists who are banded together in the Institute of Economic Affairs that they decided to let go at the Koestler total planners with a counterbarrage advocating as much of a retreat from state compulsion as can be made plausible to Britons who have forgotten that there ever was a classical tradition in economics.

Well, what in *Rebirth of Britain* is deemed a plausible retreat toward freedom in the current British context? Graham Hutton would curb the unions but continue "a national minimum wage plus locally negotiated supplements differing between industries, firms and regions." Jack Wiseman would relate payments for TV entertainment to "quantity consumed,"

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which would not necessarily put the government-owned British Broadcasting Company out of business but would force it to compete more directly for favor with commercial broadcasting. Mr. Wiseman would return some government monopolies (coal, transportation) to private ownership, but remains doubtful about gas and electricity. Gwyn James would decrease the government supports to British agriculture, but finds a good word to say for the Swedish Land Acquisition Act of 1945 which prevents "unsuitable amalgamations" of farm property and keeps nonfarmers from acquiring farm and forest land.

Denis Thomas, like Jack Wiseman, would not do away with the BBC, but would hold it "in check by competition." Colin Clark would reduce the structure of state welfare by limiting the sum total of taxation to twenty-five per cent of the national income. (He quotes John Maynard Keynes as saying to him that "your figure of twenty-five per cent" is "the maximum tolerable proportion of taxation.")

Arthur Seldon would let schools be "sold in stages to private individuals, partnerships, companies or trusts," and he would permit "doctors' private lists" to "increasingly replace National Health Service lists," but he would also create a "Permanent Commission on the Social Services" to "advise which state services should be run down and which expanded." E. G. West would increase the amount of private education, but would give all parents a basic annual sixty pounds in state vouchers "spendable on schooling."

Getting from Here to There: The Gradualist Approach

It is apparent from the foregoing recital that not even those who are "held together by a common interest in the working of free economic institutions" dare propose in England a whole hog reversion to the world of Adam Smith. Some of the contributors of *Rebirth of Britain* – notably John Jewkes, John Brunner, John Carmichael, and Jossleyn Hennessy – make a general case for economic freedom, but when it comes to "getting from here to there" the vast majority of the authors represented in this book would be content to cut the welfare state back by slow degrees.

What the whole business adds up to is a sort of Fabianism-in-reverse-gear, approaching freedom as a limit in much the same manner that Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb used in approaching socialism as a limit back in the eighteen nineties. It is the "inevitability of gradualism" all over again, but

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with the arrows pointing in a different direction.

Well, maybe such gradualism toward freedom as a limit is the only viable program for an England in which a socialist-minded Labor Party still insists that the steel business would be nationalized. Of course, it all seems a lamentably far cry from what was once preached in the land of Cobden, Bright, Lord Acton, the early John Stuart Mill, Ricardo, and Adam Smith. But Americans, these days, can't afford to feel very superior to British Fabianism-in-reverse. It won't be long at the rate we are going before we, too, are saddled with state medicine and more government supported colleges and heavy subsidies to depressed regions and all the other things that have made Britain so regressive. When we have gone down the garden path a bit longer, we, too, may be reduced to putting our hopes on the idea of "contracting out" from all manner of state programs. ◈

▸ COLD FRIDAY by Whittaker Chambers (New York: Random House, 1964), 327 pp., $5.95

Reviewed by Robert M. Thornton

IF AN INTELLECTUAL may be defined as a person concerned with the things of the mind, Whittaker Chambers qualifies with flying colors. Widely read and conversant in several languages, he sought not knowledge alone but also wisdom, the right use of knowledge. His joy and reverence for the wonder and mystery of life set him apart from those whose ultra-sophistication renders them incapable of experiencing the higher emotions. This great difference — Chambers, a humble poet, seeking God, while his fellow-intellectuals too often were content to sit smug in the confidence that "God is dead" — helps explain the treatment accorded Chambers when he revealed his break with the Communist Party.

Chambers hated the notoriety of the Hiss Case. This was not a man eager for the plaudits of the world but a man forced by his own integrity to do what he believed was right regardless of consequences. His break with communism was not unlike the experience of a narcotic addict or alcoholic "taking the cure." It left a permanent scar.

Dr. Franz Winkler has said that Western civilization is breaking down because its spiritual foundation has been ignored or discarded, first several generations ago by the "intellectuals," and now by the common man. Chambers documented this with his life. He tells of his early college days when

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few professors, if any, advocated communism, but many teachers scorned religion and derided anyone who believed in the objectivity of transcendent reality. But since man must have some religion, be it good or bad, the vacuum left by the rejection of Christianity (a good religion) was sometimes filled by communism (a bad religion).

Communism, then, is not the disease itself; it is a symptom. The "disease" is the denial of God. The world is not divided between good and bad nations, for good and evil are to be found in every nation. The problem for the West is not to "defeat" communism or "coexist" with communism but to achieve a rebirth of the spiritual life among its own people, and restore its value system. This is not a job for committees, government or private, and no amount of money will bring it about. Rather, it is for each of us to look searchingly at his own life and at his spiritual heritage.

Cold Friday is a field in Chambers' Maryland farm, deeded by Chambers to his son — a piece of the good earth as a heritage from father to son. *Cold Friday*, Whittaker Chambers deeded to posterity. ◈

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Whittaker Chambers

IT IS IDLE to talk about preventing the wreck of Western civilization. It is already a wreck from within. That is why we can hope to do little more than snatch a fingernail of a saint from the rack or a handful of ashes from the faggots, and bury them secretly in a flowerpot against the day, ages hence, when a few men begin again to dare to believe that there was once something else, that something else is thinkable, and need some evidence of what it was, and the fortifying knowledge that there were those who, at the great nightfall, took loving thought to preserve the tokens of hope and truth.

From a letter to *National Review*, July 29, 1961

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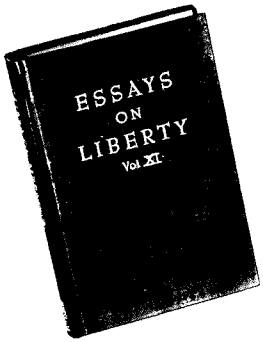

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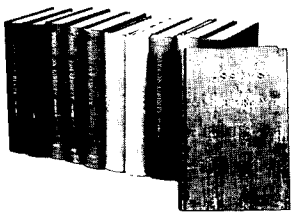

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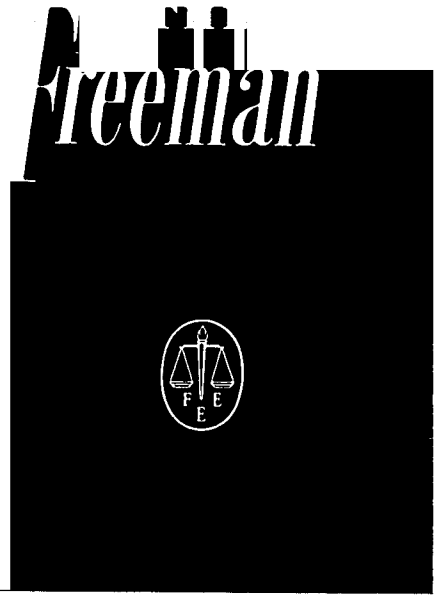

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